THE CONFEDERATES.

THE
CONFEDERATES.
A STORY.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF FORMAN, &c.

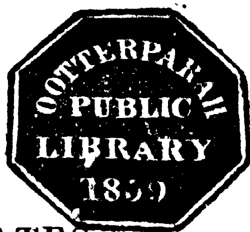
Oh, they are thoughts that have transfix'd my heart,
And often (in the strength of apprehension)
Made my cold passion stand upon my face,
Like drops of dew on a stiff cake of ice.—B. JONSON.

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THE

CONFEDERATES.

CHAPTER I.

A LAD, or, as he would have described himself, a young gentleman, named Rupert Ullesbey, having just got clear of academical restraint, for at least three months, was travelling towards the north-west of England in all the spirits belonging to nineteen years of age and the commencement of the long vacation in a beautiful summer season. He seemed to think that the vacation would neither ever be over, nor that any one moment of it would elapse without positive enjoyment to him: so, having money enough for the present, as his habits were never expensive, and

various relatives or connexions ready to receive him kindly in different parts of the island, he determined upon the expedition we have alluded to. Not that he much wanted to be roaming, perhaps he would as soon have remained quietly at home; but Rupert was of a docile disposition, and the Principal of his college having told him that it was rational to employ part of his time during the vacation in making a tour with some other young man, because Telemachus and Pisistratus (very amiable youths) had travelled together in the third book of the Odyssey, Ullesley took his advice as nearly as he could; but meeting with no companion who precisely suited him, the tour was dropped, and he proceeded alone towards the seat of a friend of his late father, near a town which we shall call Kitesworth, in Westmoreland.

Without referring to the Annual Register, which is not immediately at hand, we cannot be quite positive as to the year of this excursion. 'T was the same year

however, in which a combined squadron of French and Spanish ships were defeated by one of our Rear-admirals on their retreat from Algesiras bay; and the gentlemen of the university, who were particularly keen after news (a numerous body), had been laying wagers upon the probable destruction of some armament collected at Boulogne, when the term ended; and Rupert Ullesbey, having lost no time in the commencement of his expedition, arrived at Kitesworth rather late, it might be between seven and eight in the evening. "This way, Sir. This way, your Honour," said the landlady, at her inn gate. "The George—Tom, show the George."

"No! no!" replied Ullesbey; "don't make a fuss; I have no intention of going up stairs. Only bring the horses out. Horses for Peterstow."

"Peterstow, Sir? Squire Cothelston's, Sir? Pair o' horses, Sir? Coming out, Sir. Tom! you may go down again; the gentleman has dined."

"That's more than I know, my good madam," said Rupert; "on the contrary," looking at his watch, "I shall most surely dine here, now I think of it; and hang me but 't is a piece of luck after all, that I did not get here sooner; I should have been forced on, just at the awkward moment when the last lukewarm dish was about to be removed from the table. So now produce what absolute cold meat you have, and be quick—pray."

Here the landlord, returning from the country, touched his hat, commented upon the beauty of the evening, and practicability of providing a smoking and far superior dinner to that which had been ordered; but the young gentleman assented to his first observations alone, and when speedily and duly refreshed, asked whether it was true, as the girl who waited had told him, that instead of nine miles by the road, it was possible to walk through the wood to Mr. Cothelston's by a path little exceeding four?

"To be sure, your Honour, and it's what most folks does."

"How so? Is the carriage-road very bad?"

"The best bit o' road in the North of England."

"Then the chaise with my things will be there as soon as I am, which is convenient enough."

"Why, not quite," said the master of the house, smoothing down his foretop with a grin; "not quite, Sir. We can make good roads, you see, but we can't so well level hills. Besides, one of our horses may hardly be put to in less than ten minutes, because——"

"He is not come in from some other work, I suppose, late as it is," said Rupert, "and must have a bait after that. Well, well, let the chaise follow then; so I have my luggage before bed-time 't will be sufficient."

He then took minute directions as to his course (which they allowed to be none

of the clearest to a total stranger in those parts), looked up at the sun, down again at his watch, and turning his head to observe whether the loiterers at the inn-door were staring at him, entered the wood. Ullesbey hoped he should not lose his way, of which, from the number of the paths, there seemed to be some probability; not because he feared the being benighted, or had the most distant expectations of any adventure, but simply because he was quiet by nature and rather shy, and had apprehensions in consequence, that his arrival at an unusual hour might make him more the object of general attention and bustle to the party at Peterstow, than he cared to become. Neither did he know that there was any party at all in the house, besides the family: he only took it for granted there was, in proportion to his hopes there might not be; and, indeed, some strangers he was sure of finding, as even among their domestic circle, our youth could only boast an acquaintance

with Mr. Cothelston himself. Here it is fitting briefly to observe, that the latter, somehow or other, was early helped on in society by Colonel Ullesbey, our friend's father; and since that officer's death, rather more than three years before the period we speak of, he had professed the warmest interest in the welfare of the son, though hitherto, it must be owned, without showing himself so active in his attention towards Rupert as he had predetermined to be: for, to say the truth, he had only called on him twice before he left school, and once after he went to college. On the last occasion he stayed two days in the university, and gave as many dinners at his inn to Rupert Ullesbey and some of his particular friends. As for the mornings, the first was occupied by Rupert's showing the Home Lions; and the second, by their riding out together to see a nobleman's seat in the neighbourhood, with which Mr. Cothelston could not but confess himself grievously disappointed, and

the following short dialogue occurred between them.

"You surprise me, Sir," said Rupert; "we admire it here excessively."

"Ah!—you young men," observed the other, with an affable smile.

"Why now, Mr. Cothelston, in what respect is it defective?"

"In every thing," returned Cothelston, "that should constitute the real grandeur, appearance, and effect of a great place."

This course of objection was not very easily answered, so Rupert said no more, and they returned from their ride; nor had they met once since: though now, in consequence of Mr. Cothelston's repeated and pressing invitations, his young friend made the progress we have just seen, on his road to Peterstow.

"Surely," thought he, after trudging forwards longer than he had calculated upon in the wood, without discovering any sign of a gentleman's house or grounds; "surely I cannot have been such an idiot

as to miss my way, after all the pains that fellow at the Antelope took to direct me!" But he hesitated, much distrusting himself, and a sort of modesty, or awkwardness, or whatever it may be called, which he suspected might possibly have prevented him from giving due attention to what the landlord said, because other people were flocking around, and listening to them, at the time. From whatever cause, he now entertained little doubt he was wrong. Instead of appearing scanty, and admitting the light as if upon its extreme verge, the wood evidently thickened, and the path became less distinct. Rupert thought he had better go back to the inn, at any rate; but even his success in that operation, fast as the sun was now declining, seemed no matter of certainty; and we will not say, but that, in spite of no inconsiderable stock of native good humour and patience, he might have fretted and fumed, and ultimately, perhaps, scolded the innocent people at the Antelope, had he not just

then heard the tones of a human voice at no great distance from him.

Young Ullesbey, catching eagerly at this circumstance, listened to ascertain whence the sound proceeded, and felt convinced that some person (he thought more than one) was talking ahead of him in that very path. Hastening on, therefore, he quickly found he had judged partially right, by the discovery of a man in black, who at first stood still, with his face turned away from our traveller, deeply intent upon some speculation apparently—now muttering low, and now raising his voice to the common pitch of conversation, though clearly unaware of it: he then moved forward, but very slowly. Rupert waited some moments, till the companion whom he still supposed this person to have at hand, should also make his appearance; but perceiving nobody, and being now within three or four yards of the other, he called to him aloud. The man shrieked, or something very like it, with surprise, and turning to Ullesbey, spoke fiercely and

sharply, with countenance and gestures of exceeding irritation.

"Nay—nay, don't be impetuous, my nervous friend," said Rupert, a little piqued at his tone of voice and free rebuke; "I had no intention to startle you."

"Then what are your intentions?" cried the other. "what, in the devil's name, d'ye mean, prying, sneaking, and dodging people, in such a place as this? Who are you, and what business have you here at all?"

Our youth now, in a sufficiently provoking manner, as many might have thought, burst into an unconstrained laugh at the fellow's discomposure, evinced at least as much by first the paleness, then fiery redness, of his face, distention of his nostrils, and ferocity of his stare, as by the words which he uttered in almost incoherent rapidity. But by degrees, and not very slow degrees either, he appeared tolerably calm; and whether it happened, that he was less annoyed by being laughed at,

than being frightened out of his reverie, or that by the scanty light remaining he had discovered he was talking to a gentleman— he began to stammer out something of apology for his heat, but yet in a mode cross, dry, and reluctant.

"Pshaw! no offence," said Ullesbey. "none whatever. I know how disagreeable it is to be suddenly startled; and no one hates it worse than myself, I can assure you." Adding, to console the man, "Never shall I forget, once, on Bovington downs, when I thought there was not a human being within five miles of me,—— Oh! stop though," seeing the other turn away, "stop,—stay a moment, and have the goodness to put me right for Peterstow."

He then told the whole story of his preferring the shorter walk, to waiting for the Antelope post-horses; while at every word he spoke his companion's behaviour altered,—from churlishness, to attention, from attention, to a gracious demeanour,

and from graciousness of demeanour, to civility in its extreme; bowing, fawning, and protesting to Rupert, that the family had been all day long in eager expectation of a young friend, whom he presumed he had the honour of addressing. Nor did he cease his exertions of politeness, till he had extricated Rupert from the wood, and apprized the man at the porter's lodge who he was; with injunctions to announce him instantly at the house, lest the squire, Lady Annabella, and the young ladies, should think this, that, and t'other, had befallen him. It was on the stroke of ten when our collegian made his appearance; and the servant ushered him into a large, indeed magnificent, drawing-room, which was formerly the great hall of the mansion, but during Lady Annabella's reign had been converted into a saloon. It displayed two rows of windows on each side, was gorgeously furnished, and adorned with a multitude of pictures, all in handsome frames, of which, a couple, small sea-pieces, were

esteemed by competent judges really valuable. Lady Annabella sat in one corner, writing; her husband, at a table in the middle of the room, with a book in his hand, but talking away to another gentleman: and a showy, and certainly pretty girl, short in stature, but very neatly proportioned, had taken her station at the piano-forte, with a music-book and two candles before her; where she lolled, every thing but fast asleep, with one arm dangling over the back of her chair.

"My worthy friend and Cicerone, Rupert Ullesbey, in his own proper person, I declare!" cried Mr. Cothelston, rising and shaking hands. "Do you usually travel on foot, young gentleman, co-operating by combined movements, with a carriage on another road? For a chaise, or some vehicle, attached to your suite, has been here, this—I don't know how long; and by your not coming in sooner, we had almost thought you were lost in the woods. Lady Bell! Lady Bella! did not I say—didn't I prophesy——"

But her ladyship, though she vouchsafed a bow to Ullesbey, made a movement with her hand, intimating that her husband was not to disturb her, and went on writing.

"Come, you have never been introduced all round in form, Rupert," said Mr. Cothelston: "this is my second daughter; this is my daughter Jaqueline."

The young lady raised her head on their moving towards her, drew her hands over her eyes, and looked up, but without much timidity, it must be acknowledged, at Ullesbey; who feeling shy, and disliking the ceremony of introduction, made a speedy obéissance, and was hurried away to Lady Annabella. The latter smiled, again gently bowed, and holding the feather-end of her pen to her mouth, evidently thinking of something else the whole time, went on as before with her employment. Rupert expected to have been presented also to the gentleman at the same table with Mr. Cothelston, but that ceremony never took

place; and after a few obvious inquiries. "There, Ullesbey," said the master of the house, "I shall turn you over to Jaqueline now: young people easily get acquainted, and what I am talking of to Mr. Holtofte, would be but little interesting to you." So saying, he whirled round a chair till he brought it close before that occupied by his daughter, resumed his own conference with Mr. Holtofte, and Rupert took his seat vis-à-vis to the lady; feeling uncomfortable enough, and heartily wishing, that, as young people get intimate so easily, he was already at his ease with Miss Jaqueline. She did not help him on greatly, it must be confessed; not that she positively turned her back upon him, but taking the music-book from the instrument, she placed it on her lap, and looked through it assiduously, unconscious, as it should seem, of his presence, or, indeed, existence.

"I fear," said Rupert, who had often heard it laid down at the university, that 'twas wretched work, not to make conver-

sation to any young lady in whose company he might be thrown, " I am afraid, that I may have caused some little alarm in the family, by not arriving 'till this hour; but——"

" Alarm!" she observed, raising her eyes to his, with an air somewhat savouring of ridicule: he coloured.

" Surprise, I mean; I meant surprise."

" Oh, no," said Jaqueline; " my father always thought you would be here either to-night or to-morrow morning; and surely you do not call ten o'clock late. Besides, at all events—Better late, et cætera."

Here she condescended to look towards him, perhaps in order to see by what mode of expression her liveliness was to be admired, and Ullesbey's smile of applause did pretty well. He rather liked this commencement, and hoped she would continue to chat away. But no; not a word followed for ten minutes and upwards, during which, Rupert settled in his mind that she

was just—a character: frank, a little satirical probably, but not ill-humoured. The silence, however, at length struck him as too long for toleration, by any young man with the slightest pretensions to be called pleasant, and he re-exerted himself accordingly.

"This is a fine room, Miss Cothelston; an astonishing fine room; and I like it the better for being beyond the scale which has been decreed by your lawgivers in these matters."

"Now don't—," said she, "don't."

Rupert stopped: but fancying he could not have heard her rightly, proceeded;—"I was saying that I admire the vast height of this room, just because of the very irregularity, which in most modern houses is deemed a heresy, and proscribed."

"Oh, but—," said she, "is not all that common-place to an excess? however, I beg your pardon;" addressing herself to listen on. But Rupert, as may be supposed, had nothing further to advance upon that

topic; and being merely bashful, for vanity had little share in his composition, as soon as he recovered from this rebuff, he rallied, and ventured to ask if she practised much on the piano-forte.

"Never now," replied Miss Jaqueline; "I occasionally practised, when I was fond of music."

After the expected deprecation of, and lamentation over, the decline of that passion, Rupert owned, that but for such information, he should have taken the liberty of begging her to gratify him by playing.

"I have no objection to try," said she, "if you wish to hear the tone of the instrument. Be good enough to snuff the candles." Then arranging her book, and altering the position of her chair, she embarked upon a tremendous modern lesson, in which there were five separate long movements, clattering, rattling, darting about among the additional keys, and crossing hands, with a power and brilliancy of execution that could have been exceeded but by few professors.

While this exhibition continued, two more girls entered the room; the tallest of whom could perhaps hardly be called handsome, though her countenance was still farther removed from homeliness, and her figure, though full large, was good and imposing. The second seemed nearly of the size of Jaqueline, decidedly pretty, and dark; whereas the sisters of the house were dazzlingly fair, and so much alike in the general cast of their features, that Rupert could not mistake them.

Miss Catheleton (the taller) casting her eyes toward the instrument, appeared just to have ascertained that somebody was in the room whom she had not left there; while her companion curtsied distantly, though civilly, to Ullesbey; who, as he possessed the sort of smattering in music which so many acquire at the university, and never care to keep up afterwards, stood turning over the leaves for this splendid performer, page after page, till he thought he never should come to an end. The symphony,

however, concluded at last; and after he had paid such compliments as occurred to him, which Jaqueline received with a sort of light sneer, implying, apparently, that they were either injudicious or insufficient, he took a turn to the part of the room where sat Lady Annabella, at that moment finishing the third perusal of what she had been engaged in writing. Once more, he was received with the usual bend of the head, and simper.

"Miss Jaqueline has extraordinary execution, Madam," said Rupert; "I declare I do not remember to have heard any body with greater power, and neatness of finger."

"Who? Jaqueline?" replied her ladyship, in a mild, silky tone; "she is a sweet girl, certainly; has she been playing to-night?"

Rupert thought he had got among a strange set of people; he stood half laughing, and in doubt whether Lady Annabella was an absolute fool, or a genius; when, supper being announced, the whole party

moved into an adjoining room upon the same floor. The supper was a hot one, well appointed, with pretty substantial top and bottom dishes, lighter articles, or sweetmeats, on the sides, and, in short, exactly a dinner over again, only on a less extensive scale. And here, to preserve that minute description of manners which constitutes the charm of romances in the present day, we hold it necessary to state, that for about four years following this period, the same style of supper went on, but no longer; for afterwards they had a tray only, brought into the saloon: an arrangement, by which pounds were saved in each subsequent weekly bill, and the family escaped the penance of sitting in the profoundest stupidity for a full half hour, every night, after the cloth was removed, till Lady Annabella thought fit to take her candle.

CHAPTER II.

WHILE our traveller was in the act of establishing himself between Squire Cothelston, and that Mr. Holtofte, by whose discourse the former had been so much engrossed, he received an intimation that he must take place of the stranger, and be exalted to her ladyship's own side, having her eldest daughter for his next neighbour; where, before his shyness had sufficiently given way, to permit him to propose his assistance in carving, the lady relieved him from all hesitation upon that point, by requesting it herself. Rupert soon felt glad to be so employed; and when he had taken a glass of wine with both mother and daughter, he became more comfortable, and pretty fairly happy. No delay was now to be made in advances towards an acquaint-

ance with the young lady on his right, for with her he had hitherto not exchanged a syllable; but his first observation was received so coolly, or carelessly, or crossly, or ignorantly, that he felt fain to turn for relief to her ladyship; who having noted the overture and repulse, smiled with her constant sort of insipid sweetness, and remarked,

"My girls have no manner. They are the most natural creatures in the universe."

"Oh, oh!" thought Ullesbey, "natural —is it? I have heard something of that system;" and with an effort beyond his usual exertions, he persevered in attempting to reduce Miss Cothelston to conversation, and succeeded.

Then, indeed, he speedily ascertained that she was any thing but ignorant or dull: she not only helped him on, but led him on from topic to topic, showing upon each all the readiness and cleverness of an extensively educated — indeed a learned young woman; differing, and contradicting,

with little enough management, as to address, to be sure; but very considerable acuteness, and generally knowing most upon whatever subject they talked of, as Rupert, without the least mixture of insincere compliment, was forward to allow. These two, therefore, had a good deal the advantage over the rest of the company that night: they liked each other so well, as to continue their discussions to the exclusion of all others; and since nobody else spoke a word, the attention of the whole party became more and more absorbed by them. Rupert, intent upon what she was saying, took no notice of this. Miss Cothelston, on the contrary, looked up from time to time to see who observed her, glancing, among the rest, at her sister, who, whenever that was the case, turned away her head and hummed a tune. Their father, though, seemed to desire that the conversation should be more diffused, or at least so far diffused as to include him. So he watched his opportunity, and after a

while, the young lady came to a temporary close, in these words:—"No, no, Mr. Ullesbey, I cannot allow any body the name of a poet for one imperfect work. Point me out a single other poem by Beattie, of equal merit with the Minstrel, and it may be something. As to what Gray said of him—Beattie flattered Gray you know, and Gray was to flatter Beattie in return."

"I remember," said Mr. Cothelston, seizing the momentary interval, before Rupert could reply, "I well remember being taken to see Gray, at his rooms at Pembroke Hall, when I was quite a child; and though not fond of children, he took to me excessively. I was a pretty boy then—pretty, that is, as far as curly hair went, and a good colour; and being hoisted up on a table (for I had a remarkably clear, sweet-toned voice). I was to repeat to him part of Henry and Emma. My uncle Sam brought me, and says he to Gray, 'What you will find peculiar in this child's

articulation——'" Here, however, perceiving that Miss Cothelston and her new friend were again in a paroxysm of interesting talk, at which the gentleman on his left hand but ill concealed his propensity to laugh, the head of the family gave up the field, and leaned back with folded arms, till the ladies left the room.

"That seems a young man of talent, Clara," said Lady Annabella, as she and her daughters were going up stairs.

"I did not think you had been listening to us," returned the eldest.

"Good Heaven! Ma'am, talent!" cried Jaqueline.

"Yes, my dear," said her mother; "I hardly much attended to what he said; but he talked, I thought, with that animation —that flow—that fire—that——"

"He seems amiable," said Clara.

"One can scarce pronounce yet," observed the third young lady, "no one, but my cousin Clara, at least, whether he

is agreeable or not. He strikes me, as pleasant looking."

"Pleasant looking!" exclaimed Jaqueline. "Now that is incomparable! Nothing tries me more than an eternal affectation of benignity, and that habit of praising every body, in the lump, as a matter of course. You cannot think him well looking, Mary?"

"I certainly do."

"Not in comparison of other young men that come to the house. You don't compare him now to Sir Poole Preston?"

"Yes I do."

"Or either of the Groote's, or Lord Hogenhove, or Percival Fraunce?"

"Yes, yes, yes. I think him better looking than any of those, or all of them put together," said Mary, laughing at her cousin, and taking refuge in her own apartment; while the other stood upon the top stair, enumerating young men, every one of whom, as she proclaimed louder and louder, had the advantage in personal

appearance of their unfortunate new acquaintance. Meantime the short additional sitting of the gentlemen below continued unenlivened by any sallies of peculiar brilliancy. Squire Cothelston addressed a few cursory remarks to Rupert, upon his journey and ulterior designs; and the other man, still preserving the silence which he had not broken since they sat down to supper, employed himself in shaping some wax lately fallen from the candle, and moulding it with his fingers. Rupert yawned repeatedly, for, in truth, it was very late; but not thinking it right to be the first to move, on the night of his arrival, he mentioned, by way of saying something, his deviation in the wood, and adventure with the person whom he so unexpectedly overtook. Upon this, Mr. Holtofte, who hitherto had scarcely looked towards him, assumed a more attentive posture, and uttered some words that were not very intelligible, but expressive, as Ullesbey thought, of contempt or dis-

pleasure. He finished, however, what he had to say without noticing it.

"Ay, ay, if I am clear in my guess about this personage," observed Mr. Cothelston, "he was accommodating enough afterwards, I 'll answer for it; he is a discreet, civil man by nature. — Hey, Mr. Holtofte?"

"He 's a sad, weak, and miserable fool!" replied the other, "with whom 'tis a misfortune to have any business or connexion whatever."

Mr. Cothelston looked somewhat astonished at this ebullition.

"The fellow 's a coward, with no more command over himself than an infant, and that's the plain truth," continued Holtofte."

"What is in the wind now?" said the Squire. "This is odd behaviour, Sir, and beyond my comprehension. Why, whom do you imagine it to have been? Ullesbey, did not your guide tell you his name at last?"

Rupert replied shortly in the negative.

"What you may have taken into your head," added Mr. Cothelston to Holtofte, "I know not; but, by the solitary walk, the absent fit, and, in short, every thing but his first rudeness (and any man may be thrown off his guard for the moment by surprise), I entertain no doubt in my own mind, that it was Mac-Eure—no doubt in the world."

"Oh! true, Sir," said Holtofte, now laughing, and full as heartily as the occasion seemed to call for. "Surely, surely, Mr. Mac-Eure beyond all question. I vow, I was quite intemperate. I beg your pardon, but will freely confess, that I am rather relieved by what you suggest, as I thought it might have been an agent of mine, a caitiff fixed upon me for my sins I believe; who is always met with where he ought not to be, and whom I had sent, upon my own affairs, with the most urgent and express directions— How-

ever, 't was a private concern, and of no possible importance to you, gentlemen."

"Mr. Ullesbey," said the Squire, rising, "I wish we may not trespass upon the regularity of your college hours in this house."

"We are late enough there, now and then, Sir," replied Rupert.

"I suspect as much," said the other, shaking his head in token of shrewdness; "particularly when you have been at chapel over night. Ha! Rupert! You 're fallen upon easy days and beds of roses, my man. In my time, the discipline of your university was another kind of story; and I do assure you, a little more was expected of us, than just a Greek play in a term, perhaps, or a book or two of Herodotus, or a—— Good night."

Ullesbey bowed to them both, and was modestly making way for Mr. Holtofte to pass him.

"No! Go on, go on," cried Cothel-

ston; I have a word or two to say to Mr. Holtofte before my bedtime, yet."

The youth obeyed, and heard them draw their chairs to the table again, while a servant was ushering him to his room.

Rupert Ullesbey incurred impositions at college, for no irregularity more frequently, than the being late at morning Latin prayers; notwithstanding that they were usually read at eight o'clock—no such tremendously early duty. But now that he was at liberty to indulge in bed as long as he liked, and for no other conceivable reason, he rose at half past six. This feat achieved; for more than an hour, considerably, he found the house so disordered and uncomfortable, furniture turned topsy-turvy, dusters lying about, and himself so much in the housemaids' way, whatever room he ventured upon, that he had almost come to a resolution not to repeat that sort of offence against the habits of the family, as long as he should remain with them. The morning was bright, however, and he

might take a walk, without kicking down pails, or disturbing any body. Bending his course, therefore, towards the wood, he purposed to amuse himself, till breakfast, by tracing out, as nearly as he could, the path in which he had missed his way the evening before, and finding out in what direction he should have wandered, if he had not been accidentally assisted. Rupert soon, as he imagined, hit upon the exact spot where he had overtaken the stranger; and as he went on, thinking what uncommon fun might have been produced by terrifying him, had Frank—this—of such a college, or Ralph—that—of t' other, been in company; he perceived, that even by daylight, he had wandered from the track which he meant to keep, and got to a place covered with plain green turf, from whence the trees receded a little. While deliberating whether or not he had been there the evening before, somebody, or something, brushed away through the wood, pretty close upon his right hand, exactly as if in consequence of an endea-

vour to avoid him. Rupert was amused at this sequel to the last night's occurrences, and hoping it might be the same man whom he had seen already, about whose character he predetermined there should be something extraordinary, he made what haste he could in pursuit; but all in vain; and he judged, that whoever it might be, he had left the regular path, and effected his escape, if such were really his object, in the midst of the trees.

Ullesbey continued his walk till it was past nine o'clock, and he grew very hungry, so hungry, as to feel some degree of mortification, on being informed by Mr. Holtofte, whom he met strolling just at the entrance of Peterstow Park, that it was much if he got his breakfast for an hour yet.

"You are an early riser, Sir," added Holtofte.

"It should seem so,—for this place; though you likewise, Sir, get a turn in the air before breakfast, I see."

"Of course, you were up long before me," said Holtofte, with something of a laugh.

"Nay, I do not assume that," replied the other; "but be it as it may, I will tell you rather an odd thing; I am almost inclined to be certain that I have again disturbed my ruminating friend, whom I was talking to you about, after supper, and as nearly as may be in the same spot."

"Ha! ha! Did you, faith! Droll enough, by George! Well—how did he behave this time, and what did he say?"

"He was too sharp for me, now, and dashed off before I could be sure of him. You mentioned his name last night, Sir—Mr. Mac—something—Maclean, I've a notion."

"Mac-Eure, Mac-Eure," said Holtofte, short and quick. "Why, Mr. Ullesbey, you cannot be so intimate with the Cothelstons, as I took for granted. He is Mary Mac-Eure's father."

"I dare say he is; but unfortunately

that circumstance leaves me as much in the dark as before, not having the honour of knowing who Mary Mac-Eure is, either —Oh! by the way, they called one of the young ladies, Mary. I do recollect now. I was sure she couldn't be a sister: and is she the offspring of that wild man of the woods?"

Holtofte nodded.

"Then why did not her father come in with me, and make one of, the party?" observed Ullesbey.

"My good Sir," returned the other, staring, and looking, as it seemed to Rupert, offended, or somehow shocked, or as if he wished to give that impression, "can it be necessary for *you* to be instructed in the connexion between the Mac-Eures and the Cothelston family?"

"It may really, Sir, save a deal of perplexity, and many very awkward mistakes," said Rupert, "if you will have the kindness to give me any information you can upon the subject: because, though Mr.

Cothelston himself is every thing that's friendly to me, he is, in truth, the only acquaintance I had at this house before yesterday, and of his relations in general I know nothing."

"That girl, then, is his niece," replied Mr. Holtofte. "The Squire's only sister—that is to say, the only one who lived to be two-and-twenty, thought fit to marry Mac-Eure; but against the will, mind you, of her whole family, and of her brother, in particular; whose prejudices could less brook such a step, when he first heard of it, than if she had taken up with the poorest, reduced, make-shift country gentleman in these parts, provided his ancestors had lived a given number of years in the country. And yet, James Mac-Eure was in a mighty course of business, when they married."

"May I ask, in what line?" said Rupert.

"A merchant, he called himself; but every body else—a wholesale dealer in

clothing. He had his house, however, and his paddock, and his hot-houses, and his carriages, and his wines, and above all, his good person and address."

"From Scotland, I conclude, by his name?" said Ullesbey.

"Heaven knows," cried the other. "Ay, Scotch very likely, or Irish. He never told me where he came from; 't was enough for me to find the man in a great way in the world; and if all was acquired by his own wits, I admired him the more and liked him the better."

"You are in habits with him, then, Mr. Holtofte?"

"Yes, Sir," said Holtofte, drily: so drily, that young Ullesbey declined all further questions, and contented himself, as they walked towards the house, with a favourable remark upon Miss Mac-Eure.

"Oh, well enough, Sir; well enough. The lass, moreover, is far from being without a portion of her father's acuteness, or her mother's spirit, and makes her part

good among them. Peterstow is her home now, seemingly; and unless I am out of my judgment, her influence has by no means decreased here, since Mac-Eure's failure and separation from his wife."

Ullesbey repeated the word "failure" with an inquisitive accent.

"To be sure," said the other. "You should know, if you are to know any thing at all about him, that when this girl was twelve years old, or near it, there happened the deuce and all of a break-up in his great Liverpool concern. Now Madam Mac-Eure, having, like many other haughty Madams, sacrificed her pride to her inclination, in the affair of wedlock, and commenced her repentance of the step even before the honey-moon was over, took that opportunity of bringing perpetual differences to an end, by withdrawing herself altogether from her husband's society; with the most perfect consent (upon that head) of both parties."

"To the relief of Mr. Cothelston likewise, I should imagine," said Rupert.

"One would have thought so," continued Holtofte, "but in reality, his brother-in-law lost no favour with him through that transaction. Mr. Mac-Eure is a shrewd man, as, I think, I told you before; and by that time, on many occasions, had made himself useful to the Squire; who, as several are of opinion, then disliked his own sister the most of the two. These things are notorious, Sir. I should not have troubled you with them, but at your own desire; and as to Mac-Eure not coming in last night—you might be here a month without meeting him in their circle, and he not the less in Mr. Cothelston's confidence."

Crossing the well-shaven lawn, they now entered the breakfast-room by a glass door, and found Miss Cothelston alone at the table, considerably fretful, because a duty had been imposed upon her, which, as she seemed to hold, more properly belonged to another's province.

"I know Mary is up, perfectly well,"

said she, addressing herself at once to Holtofte, as if they had been talking the matter over together for the last half hour. "Where is she then?"

"I have not seen her, Ma'am, I protest."

"That's very strange," returned the damsel, "and very tiresome: because I know she is up, as well as I know Jaqueline's abed. There is no one single earthly advantage, that I am aware of—— Oh! good morning, Mr. Ullesbey—(in return for Rupert's bow)—in being the eldest of this family; but a great many——" Here she stared at Rupert, who had approached, as if meditating an observation, which, however, he thought it as well to defer—— "Positive burdens," continued the young lady. "It would be serving them both very right (and upon my word and honour I have more than half a mind to do so), not to make one drop of tea; but to let the water stand till it has done boiling."

"Why, Ma'am," said Holtofte, "if

that could be effected, without inconveniencing other people——"

"Mr. Holtofte," interrupted the lady, "I do not interfere with your breakfast, you know. You eat cold meat, principally, and may drink any thing else with that, as well as tea; so does my father, four days out of the seven; and as for Mamma, she'll never find out whether the water boils or not."

"But Mr. Ullesbey, Madam," continued Holtofte.

"Oh! no matter. Never mind me, Miss Cothelston," cried Rupert; "every now and then I prefer my tea cold."

"Yes, yes," said she, now somewhat freer from her fit of ill humour, though without seeming at all aware that she had exposed herself. "You may like tea cold, perhaps; but the doubt is, whether one could make tea at all, unless the water boiled, according to our system. They do, indeed, talk of fresh tea-leaves, in China, being immersed in the coldest spring water;

but those, of course, are newly gathered from the plant."

"I would give a great deal," observed Mr. Cothelston, who now entered the room, paid his devoirs to Ullesbey, and slightly acknowledged Mr. Holtofte, "I would give an infinite deal of money, to have it a point thoroughly understood and established in my family, that I take my breakfast as soon as I am up.—There cannot, in my idea, be a greater agrément in a house, than to find it—not just preparing—but ready, the moment one comes down stairs. But this, Mr. Ullesbey, this is the fifth day running——"

The young lady, however, now fearlessly met the charge which she saw approaching, repeated all the complaints of her cousin's and sister's abominable conduct, that we have just heard, and many more, concluding with an asseveration, that she was making the tea as fast as she possibly could. Rupert, in spite of all these grievances, achieved an exceedingly hearty

meal, and had nearly finished it, before Miss Jaqueline made her appearance, and quite, before Lady Annabella came in, soon followed by Mary Mac-Eure. Rupert Ullesbey thought the latter prettier, if any thing, by day than by candle-light; and looking upon the two sisters, the youngest of whom had always been called (and by no means without justice) a beauty, in her own county; and the other, who though not eminently handsome, was assuredly rather to be admired, than otherwise; he internally congratulated himself upon his luck, to be domesticated in such agreeable quarters: and having a good three months of idleness in prospect, he, of course, prepared to fall in love with one of the party at least; though it cannot be reasonably expected, that he should, as yet, have decided which.

When Jaqueline glided into the room, Miss Cothelston did not immediately commence hostilities about the breakfast; she knew better, being perfectly aware that it

would only have the effect of calling forth a flippant reply. She therefore contented herself with a glum reception of her sister, skilfully intending to include the latter in the cutting reproofs she meditated for Miss Mac-Eure; on whose appearance these operations were opened accordingly as follows:

"Pray, is there any other work, of any sort or kind, Mary, that I can do for you? or any household drudgery whatever, that I can be of service in, for the people of the family in general? either for the cook, or the house-maids, or the scullion, or ——"

"Ah! Clara, don't be cross," returned her cousin. "It only happened, accidentally, that I was away, by my taking a longer walk than usual, this morning. I tell you, I have been at the top of Sleaton Fell, and moreover I have an event to announce."

"My dear, never think it necessary to apologize," said Mr. Cothelston, whose best and worthiest notions of his own dig-

nity of character were hurt at the idea of his niece being ill treated while under his roof. "I know of no duties incumbent upon you to perform in my house, for the neglect of which you are to be scolded. Whatever you may think fit to do for our accommodation, we must esteem ourselves, ay, every one of us—essentially obliged by."

Clara turned so profusely scarlet at her father's inclination to take part against her, as even to attract the notice of Lady Annabella.

"Hey-day! what 's all this, my love?" Then turning to Ullesbey, "There 's been some trifling dispute, has there not? Clara has one of the finest dispositions I ever knew; but she soon gets affected by little things, and always shows it immediately: no concealment or contrivance with her!—A most natural creature, to be sure."

"Well, but are not you all dying to hear my event?" said Mary Mac-Eure, foreseeing, as she thought, more than one impending fit of sulkiness, if not an uni-

versal quarrel; and good-humouredly endeavouring to prevent them.

"Come, do let us have it then," cried Jaqueline; "we have just gone through three weeks of pretty uninterrupted sameness and dulness; and do, for mercy's sake, let it be worth hearing."

"There's a ship," returned Miss MacEure, "in our little bay. There is—with three masts, and streamers playing, and port-holes seemingly, and a figure at the head with a cocked hat on, as I thought, though I won't undertake for that, at such a distance; and the whole appearance excessively neat and trim, I do assure you. It could only have come in this morning."

"You are mistaken there, Mary," observed Mr. Cothelston, with something of a mysterious air.

"Is she, Sir? Is she, Mr. Cothelston? How do you know that, Sir?" said Holtofte, eagerly.

"Why, you seem uneasy, Mr. Holtofte," replied the other. "Never trust me, but I believe he has some speculation

on board; he 's a share in the vessel himself, or I am a Dutchman."

"Ha! ha! ha! that 's always your way, Sir, turning the laugh upon one," cried Holtofte. "I am pretty well used to it now; but really though, and seriously, I myself, also, saw the vessel this morning, and never recollect to have observed her before. Share in her, hey! That 's uncommonly good! No.—I must thrive a little more in my land concerns, before I venture afloat: 't is you, Sir, after all, who seem to know most of her arrival, and I suppose of her destination."

Mr. Cothelston nodded to him to be silent, and after enjoying the impression which he thought was produced on the rest of the party, by this reserve, communicated to Mr. Holtofte, in an important whisper, aside, that there was reason to doubt the vessel's having come in that day; because the gardener told him he had seen her there over-night.

It was now proposed by one of the girls,

that they should all go down to the bay and look at the ship: to which, as something must be exhibited to Rupert on his first morning, and since the beauties of their neighbourhood, which were exceedingly striking indeed, could be shown, probably, to as great advantage, in the drive from Peterstow to the coast, as in any other direction, the Squire assented, and the carriages were ordered. Holtofte, not being of the projected expedition, took leave: observing, as he went, upon the weather, which he said, looked any thing but settled, and not very favourable for open carriages. To this it was, as usual, replied, that by noon they should be very well able to judge of the day; and so in truth they were: for all the scattered clouds of the morning, which, impelled by a light breeze, had hitherto rapidly chased each other over the face of the sky, now, on failure of the wind, gathered together in one black and melancholy mass, and discharged themselves, in torrents of rain, heavy, hopeless, and unintermitted.

CHAPTER III.

Attention to the feelings of others is, as some hold, the only real good breeding, or, at least, has more to do with it, than all the graces of address and manner that can be acquired. Now Rupert had a native politeness, which led him to dread being in the way of any individual of the family, and especially to avoid interrupting the pursuits of the females. He shunned, therefore, the room where he had been received the night before, and where, by the tinkling and tuning of a harp, he collected that Miss Jaqueline had retired to practise; and establishing himself in a small oval apartment, on the ground floor, which looked out upon the shrubbery, and was furnished with various shelves of light and amusing books, he skimmed from one to another, before he

fixed; ever and anon repairing to the window, only to be assured of the desperate state of the day, and to witness the retreat of certain unhappy guinea-fowls under the trees, with drooping heads and dripping feathers.

Lady Annabella, ever delighted to be left alone, betook herself, in her own room, to her fancied employments, or actual dreams; always writing, but never reading; always absent in mind, but never thinking, to any purpose at least; while her daughters, each capable of real effective application, laboured steadily for the power of commanding admiration; Jaqueline, at her music and other accomplishments; Clara, at still severer studies.

The Squire having ascertained, much to his satisfaction, that Ullesbey had not taken possession of the principal library in the house, which he was in the habit of calling his study, seated himself at a bureau there, looked over some papers, and sent word that he desired to see Miss Mac-Eure, in

order to consult with her upon a subject not remarkably delightful to him, which he had put off from time to time, and only determined upon going through with at present, because the bad weather left him no excuse for deferring it any longer. Now, since of all the employments that occupied every inmate of Peterstow house, this conference is by much the most important to us, we shall be somewhat circumstantial in our report of it; premising only, that Mary Mac-Eure, having agreed to sing a second to Jaqueline, as long as ever the latter chose to labour at Italian duetts, that young lady expressed a strong sense of disgust at the interruption, when her cousin was sent for down.

"Take a chair, Mary," said Mr. Cothelston; "there,—look me in the face, like a good girl, and don't be frightened." But Miss Mac-Eure, though a modest, was not at all a timid girl, nor did she stand mightily in awe of any among those with whom she then lived; by no means making

an exception in favour of her uncle; though certain it is, that she loved him the best of them. However, she let him fancy himself as terrific as he pleased, and merely bowed with a grave attention.

"Do you continue to hear regularly from your mother? Do you two meet often, now? You stare, child—and naturally enough, perhaps, at hearing me mention your mother at all! But, however reasonably I may be offended with her, it does not become me absolutely to forget that there is such a person near us. Is she in health?"

"Perfectly, Sir; and from my heart I thank you for the inquiry."

"They tell me, she is become a devotee."

"Not that I know of, Sir."

"Yes, yes, you do, Mary. Come, isn't she quite an enthusiast?"

"She takes strong impressions," said Mary; "I wish I could assure you, that they were always religious impressions."

"Does she so?" resumed Mr. Cothelston. "Why then, I'll tell you what,—if she has not sufficient Christian humility, let worldly prudence induce her to offer those advances and concessions with which she well knows I shall be satisfied, and which her husband has had the good sense to make, and is consequently re-established in my favour at this moment." Mary shook her head. "I comprehend language better than signs, Miss Mac-Eure," said her uncle: "this is an awkward subject, nor can I perhaps in delicacy press the question upon you, whether you side with your father, or mother, in these differences."

"It is a constant and grievous source of distress to me, Sir, that they should have differed so much, and, I fear, so irreparably."

"You have a cautious manner, Mary; I do verily believe you are an excellent girl; but, to be sure, one loves a little candour sometimes,—a little openness,—a little venturing from that eternal guard,—

a little——however, my purpose is to be frank with you, and I proceed, therefore, immediately to the business on which I requested your attendance. Your aunt Elizabeth, my youngest sister, left you, when she died, (poor soul!) three hundred a year for your life, as I think."

"The property is called so, Sir, but I have never yet received so much: 'tis full two hundred and sixty, perhaps, one year with another."

"Oh,—that's all; well, well. Now, Mary, if there's any one thing that I feel more certain of than another, it is, that no ill use will ever be made by you, of my condescension, in laying open the state of my own affairs to you, which I am this instant about to do; and sufficiently unpleasant the avowal is, you may take my word for it." Miss Mac-Eure here vehemently opposed his intention, but he stopped her positively and decisively. "My dear," caid he, "the age of cold-blooded calculators and sophisters, as a man of

luminous faculties expresses it, has succeeded to that of chivalry; which is saying, in other words, that the representatives of ancient houses throughout the kingdom, are vied with and bearded by East Indians, ship's husbands, usurers, low lawyers, pseudo-patriots, whom I call professional politicians, contractors, and the devil knows how many besides. One must yield somewhat to the tide, Mary; one must strike in with prevailing circumstances. Now, the education of my children has been a pretty heavy expense, I can tell you; our system of living in London was no trifling concern; and, as Lady Annabella (you see I talk to you very freely), though a woman of good underst— that is, of some sort of talent, and a prodigious fine young woman when I married her (far and far beyond either of her daughters, that you may depend upon), somehow or other, from the peculiarity of her turn and genius, is of no assistance to me, under the sun, in the management of my family;—for these rea-

sons, my love, I almost think of lending my name to the new bank projected by your father, Mr. Holtofte, and Mr. Alderstoke; the last of whom, by the way, no disparagement to either of the others, I take to be the abler man of the three." Miss MacEure waited some time after the end of that sentence, in expectation of hearing more; but observing that her uncle was impatient for an answer, "I merely have learnt, Sir, from common rumour," said she, "that my father had any such design in contemplation; and it must be impossible for me to give any opinion about your joining them, my dear Sir."

"And you miserably misunderstood me, Mary," rejoined the Squire, "if you thought I had desired your opinion: no, no, this is only preliminary: this is only a sort of—a— I would say, Mary, has not your father intimated a wish, that you should give up to him the small provision we have been speaking of; for which you were to be assured of a valuable equivalent?"

"Yes, uncle Cothelston," said she, with great composure, "but I declined the proposal."

"You did, Miss Mac-Eure! what, upon your own judgment?"

"No, Sir, my mother warned me, and advised me; she even besought me not to comply, and seemed to lay the greatest stress upon it."

"And you," cried her uncle, "were full ready to be persuaded, doubtless. That's right—that's prudent now—never exchange a certainty in hand, for the accommodation of any body else, be he friend or parent, or what he may. You are at liberty to go back, my dear; I've no wish to detain you longer."

She hesitated, rose from her chair, and went to the door; then, standing with the handle of the lock in her hand, totally regardless of the look of impatience put on by her uncle at this indecision, again she shut it, and resumed her seat. "I would willingly," said she, "have avoided any

thing in this conversation that could possibly be construed into such presumption, as my venturing to reflect upon my father's conduct. To be sure, he does promise me, if I will give up my aunt's estate, what you and others say (for, of course, I know nothing about business myself), would be an ample remuneration for it; and in the event of non-compliance, it has been more than hinted to me, that though I should remain an only child to the day of his death, I have no accession of fortune whatever to expect from him. On the other hand, it seems difficult to conceive any motive but a desire for my good, that can influence my mother in the resistance she makes to the measure; and she bids me oppose facts to magnificent promises. Now, is it not a fact, Sir, that my father has once been what the world calls ruined?"

"It certainly is," replied Cothelston; "you are just talking as I supposed you would. I have no intention to argue with you, child, and told you so before."

"Stay, uncle,—hear me,—hear me," cried Miss Mac-Eure: "my parents being at variance, unhappily, I mean to trust every thing, unreservedly, to you; who have proved yourself upon all occasions so disinterested a friend—another father, indeed, to me. What you think right, I shall take for granted is right, and what you recommend to me I will cheerfully do."

Mr. Cothelston took her by the hand and led her up and down the room, pressing it, while he was deep in thought; at length he observed, "Mac-Eure assures me, he can realize what he offers you, and I believe him. That's all I will undertake to say, Mary: I place every reliance upon him, myself, backed as he is by the other persons who are to belong to the concern; insomuch that I tell you openly, I have advanced to him a good part of what I got for my Lilton-Datchett estate, and I know that other gentlemen of distinction in the county have had most confidential dealings with them; borrowing money, as I suspect,

of your father, and pledging valuable family plate to him in return, a great deal of which he and his friends have at present in their hands. But after some doubt, I have now come to one resolution, my dear, which is this: that you shall never incur the remotest chance of a loss, by the sort of reliance upon my honour, which, with such admirable sense and propriety, you announced a minute ago; and though I own I was at first desirous for you to gratify your father in this matter; upon due consideration, I think, perhaps, you had better not, till we have the completest satisfaction, at least, in all unexplained points; which, I entertain no doubt, the next twenty-four hours, or less, will thoroughly afford us." He then kissed and dismissed her, with promises of his constant protection: in terms so pompous, as might have excited the ridicule of some, and the spleen of others, but which Mary perfectly well understood to mean real kindness.

Dinner was actually on the table at

five, punctually; and Ullesbey rather manœuvred to sit by Miss Cothelston again, feeling himself most acquainted with her of the younger part of the family; an arrangement which she manifestly favoured, and proved very gracious to him, and undoubtedly very agreeable. Rupert's spirits rose with the progress of dinner, and it was he, as report goes, who made the first general observation. "I think," he remarked, "it will clear up through the remainder of the day, and we may get down to the ship at last."

"I think very differently," said Jaqueline; "but I know what we may do;—we may prepare ourselves for the longest and dullest evening that ever mortals were condemned to: my father would order the dinner an hour earlier than usual; though I said at the time, it had set in for an incessant wet day, and that nothing would be done in the afternoon (in the way of an expedition I mean); and so it has. There! there!" the heaviness of the clouds seem-

ing to increase as she spoke, and the rain pelting against the windows.

"I never committed myself, Miss Jaqueline," replied the Squire, "in any thing like a prophecy about the weather; and as to a tedious evening, well-educated young ladies will know how to shorten that, by application and improvement."

Jaqueline now appealed to her mother: "Don't you think 'twill be dreadfully long, Ma'am?"

"A sempiternity, my dear," said Lady Annabella.

"I had another reason, if it must be inquired into," observed Mr. Cothelston, "for dining early; as Alderstoke and Mac-Eure are coming here on business, at half past six."

"Shall we see them, think you, Miss Cothelston?" said Rupert to his next neighbour, softly; "I am not without curiosity about Mr. Maç-Eure:" he then briefly went over the story of his supposed interview with that person on the evening before.

"Hem! musing walks and soliloquies!" returned the lady: "his speculations are rather worldly than romantic, I take it. Nay, there's nothing to see in him: he may be clever, which I doubt; but there is every reason to suppose he was not a gentleman born, and though a connexion, as you are aware, of ours, he is not a gentleman now,—that is the truth. You will like Mr. Alderstoke, however, who is a pleasant man,—I don't say but he is, of amiable manners, and such as would be approved any where."

"My dear Ullesbey," cried Mr. Cothelston, soon after the cloth was taken away, "you must give us the best part of this vacation—that's decided; and why not the whole?"

"You're exceedingly good, Sir," said Rupert.

"We shall have sport for you in the shooting season upon our hills. Are you much of a performer? I myself was reckoned the best shot in the county, but two,

formerly; though I have given it up for years." A servant now came in to announce somebody. "Oh,—Messrs. Mac-Eure and Alderstoke!" cried Cothelston; "show them here."

"Mr. Alderstoke is come. Sir," said the man.

"Yes,—and Mr. Mac-Eure," said the master of the house.

"Only Mr. Alderstoke, Sir," replied the servant. Mr. Cothelston looked surprised, and somewhat displeased, but made no further remark; and the gentleman being introduced—at once, Rupert Ullesbey, contrary to every expectation, recognised his friend of the woods! The other proved equally forward to acknowledge the acquaintance, by bowing to him immediately after he had paid his compliments to the family, with a sort of civil leer, implying that there was some understanding, in the nature of a joke, between them; which Alderstoke quickly explained to the whole

party, amusing them freely for a few minutes at his own expense.

"Come, come, Sir," said Rupert, "you may now stretch your candour a little farther, since you are in the vein, and confess, that I had every thing but surprised you, under similar circumstances, this morning also."

"No, no, I deny that," returned the former, with the same light laugh; "did you really fancy so?"

"I vow, then," said Ullesbey, "some one scrambled away from me among the trees; and, as I believe, much about the place where we met before. Surely 't was you, Mr. Alderstoke?"

"No; I give you my word," replied the other.

Mr. Cothelston now inquired after MacEure, at which Alderstoke stared, declaring he had parted from him, not twenty minutes before, fully persuaded that his friend was then on his way to Peterstow; and so firmly convinced did he feel of Mr. MacEure's intentions, that, till Mr. Cothelston

mentioned him (Alderstoke added) he had concluded the former must be, at that moment, somewhere in the house.

"Tiresome enough!" said the Squire. "because there are affairs of more than ordinary importance to be discussed that cannot bear delay. When d' ye think he 'll be here? Stay—take a little white wine to it;" perceiving that Mr. Alderstoke, tormented with a sudden violent cough, had spilt a glass of Port over his cravat and white waistcoat.

The ladies now, for a few minutes before they left the room, brought on a more mixed conversation; and Ullesbey evidently saw that Mr. Alderstoke was treated by both the sisters with far more consideration than Holtofte, being not only listened to, but rallied with, in a style very little removed from familiarity; while. on his part, he showed much address in his mode of talking to them, flattering delicately; and differing adroitly, so as ultimately to fall into their opinions with a

better effect. Some impression seemed even to have been made upon Lady Annabella, by the lively circulation of remarks that now ensued: she looked up once or twice, smiling faintly, and observed to Ullesbey, who held the door open, as she quitted the parlour,

"Did you never see Mr. Alderstoke before? He has a prodigious deal of talent ——"

Rupert, as we have already observed, had a habit, in company, of attending to what might be agreeable to other people as well as himself; and since he knew, on the present occasion, that Mr. Cothelston and his ally must be pining to get rid of him, he soon acquainted them with a peculiarity of his, which had not, as we understand, been noticed by any of his fellow-collegians—that he drank, namely, little or no wine. Besides, he begged them to allow him to go and finish the first volume of a new species of novel that he had been reading in the morning, which had

only come out since the beginning of the long vacation, and the world were distracted about it: it was called "The Auld Wife of Logierait; or, Half a Century hence;" and the story was so inimitably told, the characters so happily kept up, and the future manners of the Perthshire highlanders given with such vigour and probability, that Rupert protested he could hardly tear himself from it. How the ladies passed the time between dinner and tea he never thought of inquiring, till upon a summons to that latter refreshment he met Miss Mac-Eure on the stairs. They were passing each other with a civil half-bow, when Mary observed,

"Pray, Mr. Ullesbey, may I ask how soon my father arrived, and whether he is now in the parlour?"

"I am sorry that I cannot tell you exactly: no doubt, Mr. Mac-Eure is with them, though—I dare say he is—but really I left the room soon after you did."

"Oh! thank you," said she, and was gliding away.

"I hope," said Ullesbey, "the Miss Cothelstons have found the hours since dinner less heavy than they seemed to expect."

She laughed, and replied, "They took my uncle's hint, I fancy, and had recourse to their studies; to which, people who have made such proficiency as Clara and Jaqueline, are never long disinclined."

Rupert, on entering the saloon, approached the end of the sofa where Miss Jaqueline was seated, with a dictionary and writing materials on a table before her, looking exceedingly elegant and pretty, it must be confessed; and he hoped to find her equally gracious and communicative: but, in her accustomed manner, she stared full at him, not saying a word, and with as much composure as if she had been contemplating part of the wainscot.

"You've had nearly twenty-four hours' experience of the ways of this house, Mr.

Ullesbey," said the eldest sister, "and that will do, I presume."

"How so, Miss Cothelston? How do you mean?"

"Why, you vote it, the female part of it at least, so stupid, that, during a wet day, without a minute's interval, you have never favoured us with your company once; although I am not altogether without doubts, whether we might not have contributed nearly as much to your entertainment as the jargon about business that you must have been regaled with in the eating-room."

Here Rupert gave her the same information that he had just imparted to Mary Mac-Eure.

"And is it within possibility," observed Jaqueline, throwing herself all back upon the sofa, "that you can have been sitting alone ever since? Highly flattering to the society of this family, upon my word. You must have great resources in your own mind!"

"I feared I should be troublesome."

"Troublesome! Pooh! I thought you were fond of music. Pray, what do you imagine one practises for? No, no—I don't mean exactly that—but the fact is, that though every man raves about his love for music, because he fancies it would be a reflection upon his taste if he had it not, ninety-six out of the hundred are totally indifferent to it; and seventy, at least, if they would be honest, positively dislike it. They want an absolute sense; they have no ear; they do not know one tune from another, except by the words; they can't distinguish a minuet from a jig, or a jig from a——"

"My sweet Jaqueline," observed Lady Annabella, "you are growing eager, my love, and let your enthusiasm run away with you. Do not raise your voice so."

That he was to apply to himself a full share of these general charges, Rupert full well understood; and indeed he seemed as if he was preparing a pretty smart defence,

only the gentlemen came in at that instant, but with no addition to their number. Mr. Cothelston (previously, however, looking around, to discover whether Mary might be in the room) then proceeded to vent his indignation against Mac-Eure for disappointing them, till, his tea being handed to him, he unhappily burnt his mouth by the first incautious sip: upon which he resumed his Philippic, but with considerably more acrimony of invective, till the tea grew cool and fit to be drank.

In order to compose his temper, apparently, the Squire this night proposed a game at whist; for which the accommodating Mr. Alderstoke declared himself at all times ready. Miss Mac-Eure was pressed into the service upon her return; and Rupert, who would fain have escaped, first flew for refuge to the Miss Cothelstons; they, however, with an air of triumph and superiority in their ignorance, declared themselves utterly uninformed in every game upon the cards. He then pointed

out Lady Annabella; at which Alderstoke smiled, and Mr. Cothelston treated the suggestion as if he had desired that one of the coach-horses should be brought in to take a hand. At last, therefore, our friend was obliged to surrender at discretion, after protestations of his being but a bad one, with a frail memory, a beginner, and so forth; as to all of which, Mr. Cothelston, whose partner he became, lost no time in letting him know, though not uncivilly as to terms, that he entirely concurred. For the other players: Mary MacEure took pains, and made no striking blunders; Cothelston himself lectured eternally, but played ill enough; while Alderstoke showed evidently that he knew the game. Just before supper the latter was called out of the room. He stayed long, not returning till all the rest had been seated at the table some time; then, without eating a mouthful, or stopping ten minutes, he again rose, and left them abruptly. Miss Cothelston turned to Ulles-

bey (for it seemed settled that they were to be the friends), and said, "I am confident something extraordinary has happened; for Mr. Alderstoke is more off his guard than ever I saw him in my life. I was struck with his look when he came in to supper; and made an observation to him on purpose, to which he gave me no kind of reply: now, that is not his general habit—Stay though, here he is."

The door was then opened; but a servant only appeared, to let the master of the house know that Mr. Alderstoke must speak with him directly.

The curiosity of all who remained being now pretty highly excited, their impatience became proportionable; and the *natural* and sensitive Miss Cothelstons fretted, because nobody came back, till their mother had taken measures for her departure to bed.

"Surely, Ma'am," said Jaqueline, "you will wait till we hear—— You'll stay below till we hear something?"

"No, my dear," returned her ladyship. "I feel, as it were, certain that no great event has happened; I've a presentiment that what your father is learning from Mr. Alderstoke would not interest me in the least."

Meanwhile Mary Mac-Eure, who had strongly taken the impression that this communication related to her own father, though she ventured on no remarks, turned pale, and evinced such symptoms of anxiety and distress, as induced Ullesbey to attempt to soothe her, by offering to make instant inquiries: and when she objected to his following her uncle, he rang the bell; which was answered by the same servant who had called away Mr. Cothelston. Every tongue, except Miss Mac-Eure's, now opened upon this man; but nothing could be collected from him beyond a declaration, that he shouldn't wonder if 't were something about the ship that had been in the bay near Peterstow.

"Had been?" said one. — "Is n't it there still?" said another.

"No, Ma'am: she sailed full five hours ago."

With this surmise they were compelled to rest content for the night: not that Miss Mac-Eure's mind was much better at ease; she by no means felt satisfied but that the man could have entered into more particulars if he had chosen; nor did Rupert, who waited an hour at the least after the others were gone, meet with any success in gaining additional information.

Frequent footsteps passed the drawing-room door, which he always supposed to be Mr. Cothelston's or Alderstoke's, and always proved mistaken, till he precluded all further disappointment by retiring to bed likewise.

CHAPTER IV.

In the morning, the plot seemed to have thickened: breakfast was indeed laid at the usual time, but not a soul came near it except Ullesbey, and he, growing impatient, opened the door repeatedly—looked out—and then walked out—into the hall; where, from the upper part of the house, he first heard peevish exclamations in more than one female voice, and afterwards the following remark from a room upon the ground-floor:

"Poor girl! I 'll warrant ye she takes on enough about it; so I was determined she should have one fair night's sleep before she heard the whole, be it how 't would."

These words, as he soon after found out, were addressed by Matthew, the foot-

man, to a housemaid, who appeared to express as much sympathy with the case, as a furious course of scrubbing at a grate would permit her.

Down came Miss Cothelston at length. "O Mr. Ullesbey!" said she, "we are in such distress! The next London season is out of all question for us; and my father even goes the length of saying, that it may be necessary to curtail our establishment here. Don't you pity us?"

"Indeed," replied Rupert, "if any thing unpleasant has occurred to the family, I shall be very sincerely grieved; and, without prying into secrets, I only beg leave to assure you, how eager I am to be employed in any manner by which I may be useful; and if I cannot be of service, it will surely be best for me to remain no longer in your way."

"Heaven and earth! don't think of leaving us! And what do you mean by secrets? The affair's already known through-

out the neighbourhood, and will be, before to-morrow night, over the whole county."

"'T is a perfect secret to me, I protest, Miss Cothelston," said Ullesbey.

"Then I must tell you," she replied, "that Mr. Mac-Eure is a great villain: he has used us most shamefully, cheated Papa out of money, goods, and the Lord knows what, deceived his partners, and made his escape from the country, after embezzling every thing he could lay hands upon"

"What a blow!" cried Rupert. "What a misfortune! I am sadly shocked to hear of it: he took his passage, I suppose, in——"

"That odious abominable ship that we were to have gone to see," cried Miss Cothelston, interrupting.

"Bless my soul! Poor Miss Mac-Eure, too!" said he.

"Yes.—There 's another vexatious circumstance," returned Clara.

"'T would be something in the nature

of satisfaction, now, to have one's talk out, and say how scandalous and infamous such conduct is; but that you see cannot, with proper feeling, be done before Mary."

"I should think not," said Rupert.

"We 've a regard for her, Mr. Ullesbey."

"To be sure you have," said he.

"Why? Why? What do you know about her?"

"Nothing more, than that she 's a young lady of apparent merit, and extremely pleasing deportment."

"Merit? Yes. But I do not call Mary a very open character," replied Miss Clara, as she (without grumbling this time) examined the tea-chest; in which employment she had not been long engaged, before her father and Miss Mac-Eure joined them; the two latter having been busied for upwards of an hour at a conference, wherein Mr. Alderstoke assisted, as far as a man so nearly beside himself (according to his own acknowledgment) could be said to as-

sist. The whole of what passed in the library, it is by no means necessary for us to repeat: it will be sufficient to mention, that Mr. Cothelston, when he had announced to his niece this overwhelming intelligence, did certainly, at first, direct all his attention to comforting her, without adding a word about himself.

"And in truth, my love," said her uncle, "he never could be called a very affectionate father."

"Gracious mercy!" cried she. "But this is so dreadful and utterly unexpected! What can have become of him?"

"Become of him!" rejoined Alderstoke fiercely. "He has wherewithal to support himself, I reckon, go where he may."

"Hush! hush! Mr. Alderstoke," cried Cothelston: "never mind, my dear, what he may say at this moment; you see the state he is in." Then drawing her aside, while the other continued to rave, he said, in a lower voice, "Consider too

his personal mortification, in addition to all other grievances. Consider the taunts of the world, when a person of his peculiar character for penetration and shrewdness, lets himself be thus cheated and made so miserable a dupe."

Mary wept sorely at these words, with which the now blasted name of her father was of course directly connected.

"I know you, also, have suffered by this event," said she. "I am certain of it, uncle; therefore do not try to deceive me."

"Undoubtedly I have, Mary; and shall exhibit to mankind, I trust, that fortitude and those resources of mind and understanding, which will be looked for from some little reputation that perhaps I established early in life, and have since endeavoured to support."

"I am resolved, uncle Cothelston," she continued, "to give over into your hands all the property that my aunt left me, without the slightest reservation; and

shall be thankful for whatever you may please to allow me out of it."

"Miss Mac-Eure," said the Squire, raising his voice, "if you mean that we are to continue friends, let me never hear that proposal from your mouth again. Nay, no reply—or I shall be very angry. I know not yet, that my mode of living at Peterstow will be materially affected by these transactions; but if it were, the addition you make to the household expense is as nothing; and there are times when I doubt whether my own daughters' education (though in some points an incomparable one) has been quite so perfect, on the side of the female domestic duties—softness, for instance, sweet temper—docility—you understand? Odso! Mr. Alderstoke. Rouse thee, man, rouse thee, and come in to breakfast."

This, however, Alderstoke declined, and in conformity with all the passion he had evinced before, dashed out of the house without taking leave of any one.

"Now that is what I call ill behaviour," observed the Squire to his niece, as they crossed the hall. "This person's strength of mind, I perceive, is far from what it has been rated at. He cannot, you see, bear up in the least against this blow—There! Do ye hear? Slamming the doors, one after another.—Vastly disagreeable, I must say."

Notwithstanding all these calamities, the breakfast dawdled on, as usual, and by degrees the whole family were assembled. Nothing memorable passed however; Miss Cothelston appealed to her father against Rupert's threatened desertion of them; and "a desertion," the Squire said, in such strong terms, he should consider it, just at this period, that the youth was overpowered, and withdrew all opposition. Mr. Cothelston, also, got vexed with Lady Annabella, for first declaring, that she could not support the idea of any change whatever in their accustomed habits, and in the next moment hoping

that they should quit Peterstow entirely, and retire to a cottage, which, among their wilds and mountains, could soon be made (she said) a sweeter little elegant thing, than some one in particular that she alluded to in Wales. This folly provoking him, he spoke with so much more roughness than he was used to do, that he felt all the day after, greater concern, on account of such an ebullition of spleen, than his lady (who had not attended to him) did, about that, and the flight of Mac-Eure into the bargain.

We must now accompany the restless Alderstoke, who scampered from Peterstow, galloping like a madman through the villages; while the boys hallooed after him, and the mothers, sometimes rating him, and sometimes their brats, were often barely in time to snatch the latter from under his horses' heels, till he arrived at Mr. Holtofte's lodging, in a small country town, hard by. That gentleman, luckily, as it seemed, for Alderstoke, happened to be within: since, in the course of

a deep consultation which they held together, either the superior fortitude of his companion, or the arguments he adduced, or the sight of a fellow-sufferer, which it must be owned has no unfrequent efficacy in enabling us to sustain our own misfortunes, or some other consideration, composed the distraction of Mr. Alderstoke pretty speedily and effectually, and permitted him to give undivided attention to the measures suggested for their benefit and security. They now resolved to deny broadly that any partnership had ever existed between themselves and Mac-Eure; and as all the goods and money, with very trifling exception, which had been advanced by different people, were certainly intrusted to Mac-Eure alone, and upon his credit, and as, beyond doubt, no formal acknowledgment, either in writing or otherwise, of a partnership, could ever be established against his two friends (for so, from this hour, they thought fit simply to style their connexion with Mac-Eure); not a single

article of all the various property lost in the county by the fraudulent conduct of the latter, could be recovered eventually from Holtofte and Alderstoke. Swindlers, liars, and scoundrels they were called, indeed, full liberally; but they stood their ground, and, aided principally by Mr. Alderstoke's discretion and address, they ultimately regained a certain degree of estimation, particularly that of Squire Cothelston, to whom they continued to recommend themselves, by fair promises, absolute submission, the humblest and civillest deportment, and protestations which there could be no apparent reason to disbelieve, that they, of all men, were most injured in circumstances by the absconding of their late associate. All this, however, was only compassed gradually; and for the present, when the two worthies had laid down the heads of their intended operations, they rode out together. Alderstoke meant to reach a place called Westerwolde before the evening, and

Holtofte at first proposed to bear him company the whole way; but to this, upon some motive or other, the former soon began to make objections, and, after much circumlocution, expressed his doubts whether a visit from both might not be too much for the spirits of the person who dwelt there; adding, that, from length of acquaintance, he believed himself authorized to say, he could announce this unpleasant intelligence with least pain to the lady.

"Mighty dreadful news," replied Holtofte. "A mighty affliction to be sure! The flight of a husband whom she hated, and had herself abandoned! And why am I to be excluded? Unless indeed," he added with a bitter sneer, "you have a mind to persuade her that she 's already a widow; then perhaps I could comprehend your prohibition; for you were of late the favourite, I acknowledge."

Alderstoke manifested uncommon emotion, turning absolutely white with anger

at this sally; but after the lapse of full five minutes, during which he did not trust himself to speak,

"Don't let us irritate each other, Dick," said he: "I am sure there's no wisdom in that, under our many embarrassments."

"I hardly think there is," replied the other. "Well, I'll tell you what we may do; we may ride on to the gate together, at all events; and then, as I'm going four miles beyond it, I shall leave the coast clear for you. Hey-day! What now?"

Alderstoke's mare, just at that moment, started at something in the hedge, and ran across the road; while her rider, depressed in mind, nervous, and fretful, swore at her, spurred her in outrageous passion, and was endeavouring to make her push by, when she started and plunged as before.

"She sees an angel in the way, I suppose, like the ass of the prophet," said Holtofte, still itching to laugh at and tease him.

"Pr'ythee, do not torment me," cried the other, almost in tears of vexation, "with thine accursed, senseless, ill-timed jokes. Find out, can't you, what is in the hedge."

This, Holtofte had already accomplished, by the discovery of a ragged boy, who, in quest of a bird's nest, had wedged himself into the very middle of the hedge, or rather, fortunately for him, squeezed himself three parts through, which gave him ready egress on the farther side, just as Mr. Alderstoke was approaching with uplifted horsewhip.

Soon they arrived at a gate that led into an exceedingly bad private road, branching off at right angles from the one they were upon. Holtofte nodded, therefore, and pursued his own way; while the other scarce made him any parting salutation, but muttered to himself (as with difficulty he got the gate open, for it was broken and trailed upon the ground) something about vulgarity and unfeeling brutality, and seemed to lament the grievous fate of any

one whose fortune should have connected him with a wretch to whom those terms were applicable. In this temper, Mr. Alderstoke growled, all down the lane, till he came in sight of a low stone house, very old and deplorably out of order: it was of the smallest at present; but evidently had once formed a part of a considerable and spacious habitation, as well from the unfinished appearance of things where one side of the building terminated, as from the dimensions of the few rooms that the house now contained.

His horse was taken by a stout female servant, who, to judge from her appearance and attire, did all the work of the establishment, garden and stabling inclusive; and on her report, that her mistress was at home, he made for the only sitting-room in the place, knocked with his knuckles at the door, and presented himself.

"I will not say, Mr. Alderstoke," observed Mrs. Mac-Eure, as soon as she dis-

tinguished him, "that I am sorry to see you here again so soon; but seriously, I cannot feel glad: it looks, I must say, so little like a disposition to pay any attention to what I recommend, and to the peculiar difficulties of my situation. I know you to be a disinterested and valuable friend, and consequently your visits would be always acceptable to me; but we must—I must, at least—consider the effect given to the people around; nor suffer, circumstanced as I am, the possibility, the shadow of a reflection to be fixed upon any part of my conduct. Besides, you are my benefactor, 't is universally known, and I am well satisfied it should be. To you and your charity, if I must speak out, am I indebted for the very house over my head, when my own kindred abandoned me, after another person had dissipated the fortune I brought him, defrauded and ruined me. These things, Mr. Alderstoke, increase a thousand-fold the means afforded to the censorious and malignant of misrepresent-

ing me; and in proportion, allow me to observe, the necessity of the utmost caution, scrupulousness, and delicacy throughout your deportment."

"To every word of which, Madam," returned Alderstoke, "with the exception of the extravagant terms in which you think fit to mention any slight accommodation that I may have been fortunate enough to assist you with,—I agree implicitly. Nor had I any more design of troubling you at Westerwolde, this morning, than of making a journey to London, till I learnt an event, which cannot be concealed from you, an event that I fear will shock you extremely; but which I judged it more fitting to communicate myself, than to suffer it to reach you through the gossip of the neighbourhood."

"Does it relate to my daughter?" said Mrs. Mac-Eure, in as firm a voice as she could command.

"Madam, it relates to your misguided husband."

She made no answer, nor spoke at all, till he had told the story twice over, and added some comments upon the inconvenience, and, in many instances, serious distress, which Mac-Eure's conduct must very widely occasion.

"Ay," she at length replied, "this winds up the whole: this is the natural result of getting at every end by the shortest way, and a total want of principle in all the concerns of life, without one solitary exception. 'T is nothing to me: we were become strangers, and he had done me all the harm he could; but I would fain hope, yet, that his career may meet with no public and ignominious termination."

This return to the sübject of his distress, seemed to have renewed in Alderstoke all the anguish and fury of the morning.

"I clung to his friendship," cried he, as he stamped about the room, "when all the world else had declared against him.

I prevented your brother from giving him up. I freely intrusted him with——"

"True, Mr. Alderstoke," said the lady, interposing. "The injury you may have suffered, is probably heavy indeed, and you will, doubtless, want your own house now, which I shall be ready to leave to-morrow; with feelings of deep gratitude, believe me, for the shelter I have received here."

This arrangement, however, was more adverse to Alderstoke's views, than any thing that could have been suggested: he opposed it with all the eagerness of his nature, vowing and swearing, that she assumed infinitely too much, in imagining it could be necessary, and beseeching her not to regard too closely any words that might fall from him in his present trouble and confusion of mind. If driven from his own residence, he added, which might not be the result of this business, after all, he never could think of living at Westerwolde; for that would only have the effect of incessantly recalling to his memory, how his

own fortunes had declined from the condition of his ancestors.—" And you ought not," he continued, " I take the liberty to say, you must not, Madam, involve yourself in misery that you have hitherto had no experience of, through any of those scruples which an overstrained sense of dignity and propriety may excite. Where would you go, I make bold to ask, if you left this place?"

" I have not determined."

" To your brother?"

" Not if I starved upon the moors."

" I cannot discommend your resolution," said he. " Much would be required at Peterstow vastly repulsive to your spirit and independence; and Lady Annabella is a sort of impracticable person, who can scarce be propitiated, even by perpetually administering to that frivolous vanity, which you, of all people, my dear Mrs. Mac-Eure, would hold to be most insufferable."

" Do not enlarge upon it, Sir; for the topic is sufficiently unpleasant; but have

the goodness to listen to me. What possible right can they claim to detain Mary now? Her father, indeed, the most accomplished of sycophants, for his own purposes, and indefatigable in persecution, thought proper to intrust her to my brother, instead of me, when pressed by the inconvenience of providing a home for her himself; but since he has fled the country, I shall insist upon having my child restored to me. I shall.—Why do not you speak?"

"I think, do you know," said Alderstoke, "that such a measure requires consideration."

"Not at all," cried she, with vehemence. "Consideration! Consideration for whom? I have no will, in this affair, to consult but my own. As for the Peterstow people—I defy them; and inasmuch as it crosses their inclinations, it will enhance my satisfaction—I promise you."

"Are you quite sure, though, that it actually will cross their inclinations?" said he. "Her uncle is fond of her, no doubt; but are you altogether so certain, that my

lady and the daughters have n't their little jealousies, and do not want to get rid of her?"

"They well may be envious," replied the other. "For I declare to you, solemnly, that if any body wanted to insult me beyond all chance of forgiveness, he need only attempt a comparison between Mary and either of those conceited, odious beings, in mind, person, or any conceivable circumstance: nay, in fortune even, she's their equal—their superior, I vow. What will their father be able to save for them, with his ostentation and insolence, I should be glad to know?"

"Ay, fortune," observed Alderstoke, leaning over a chair in a musing posture; "Miss Mac-Eure is adequately provided for, certainly: so well, that it seems natural she should prefer the indulgences she has been used to, the elegancies, that is to say, of her uncle's establishment, to—to —to say the truth, I almost doubt whether she herself would choose to reside here entirely."

"Now you talk backwards and forwards," said the lady; "for, if those people want her away, 't is much if they cannot make her present home so irksome, as to reconcile her to the change; but whether Peterstow is agreeable to her or not, you may assure yourself, that there never was in existence a more dutiful child than Mary; and I am positive she would go with me to America, if I required it. She comes here more frequently than you imagine, and would do so much oftener if the others would let her; and to tell you the real fact (except as to the house that protects me from the weather), I am, and long have been, supplied by her with whatever tends in the least to my enjoyment. Not an article that you find here, furniture, books, or any earthly thing, contributing to one's comfort, but it is of her providing."

"Divinity in plenty, I see," said Alderstoke, turning over the books. "Your taste in study, Mrs. Mac-Eure, might perhaps have been more happily consulted. You think for yourself, I've a notion."

"It may be, I do," she replied. "We have talked, you know, upon the subject before. However, be that as it will, Mary conceives all this to be of service to me; and you may take my word for it, that notwithstanding their own opinions, or doubts, upon certain matters, the parent does not draw breath, who would not choose his child to think and act as mine does."

"No doubt," said he, "no doubt; and far am I from affirming that it will be any disadvantage to you to be made a convert by her; for she'll attempt it, I will be sworn, when you come to live together. Many a shrewd argument, and much edifying theological discussion, will these old walls resound with, in the long winter evenings."

"Mr. Alderstoke," she replied, her countenance showing her disgust at this suggestion, "my daughter, as you perfectly well know, will neither take upon her to lecture or dispute with me upon any occasion whatever; nor is it yet so decided, that I shall have her here at all, for a per-

manent residence, unless she should herself propose the plan. It might—it certainly might, be playing the game of the people you mention. Now, I am an open enemy, if an enemy at all: I abominate those women, nor care I one farthing who hears me say so; my brother's neglect and ill-will I might pass over; but the women have treated me with insolence."

The other sighed and shook his head: then reverting to the topic of Mac-Eure's emigration, and having heard the lady avow, that, dead or alive, in England or abroad, ruined or flourishing, she never looked for the remotest assistance from her husband again; which sentiments, though he gently combated them, he internally and fully concurred in; Alderstoke rose, and took leave, with a bow which he meant should express more than the forms of mere ordinary politeness.

CHAPTER V.

It was no very early hour when Mr. Alderstoke arrived at Westerwolde, the seat, or rather all that remained of the seat, of his own ancestors; and the conference with Mrs. Mac-Eure having drawn somewhat into length, the shades of night began to thicken apace before he left the house.

"How confoundedly soon it has got dark this evening, for the time of year!" said he, as he mounted.

"And what if it have, Sir," returned the person who brought out his horse, the strapping female domestic, that is to say, whom we have already noticed, with the flippancy but too common among only servants, and those exceedingly useful ones. "You should know your way to and from Westerwolde, one would think, dark or shining."

"There may be inconveniences in staying out late," muttered Alderstoke, "even to those best acquainted with the country. The weavers at Finndal have struck work, as I hear, and the deuce knows how many mischievous ill-disposed rabble are loitering upon the roads. They hold their meetings clear of the towns, that is very well understood." The maid of all-work denied, or strongly doubted, the fact of the manufacturers having struck, in the first place, and thought fit to add, in the next,—

"Besides, for why should they trouble their heads to meddle with you, Mr. Alderstoke, unless you go to meddle with them? and that you won't be over-likely to do, I fancy."

"You fancy!" replied Alderstoke, gruffly: "keep your fancies to yourself, till you're asked for them." At the same time, plying his spurs vigorously, he tore along at such a rate as to make it evident, that of whatever nature his apprehensions might be, he was no timid rider in the dark for fear of a common fall. When the moon

rose, which she did gloriously before he had gallopped very far, he slackened his pace a little; and in order to reach his own dwelling the more conveniently, which consisted of a small prim new house not two miles from Squire Cothelston's, that had before been let as a farm, he adventured upon a short cut across Peterstow park. There, had he continued to ride as furiously as he set out, he must inevitably have charged a gentleman and lady, who, arm in arm, were enjoying a romantic and interesting walk, illumined by Cynthia's silvery beams, which, as the lady pronounced, only shed a milder day upon tower and tree, banishing by their all-soothing influence those tumultuous feelings, that sense of irksome duties, and all those petty, corroding cares, which constitute the usual alloy of human felicity, during the broad light of the sun. Much poetry also she poured forth upon this occasion, and we will do her the justice to say, some that was really worth remembering. So, undoubtedly, her companion thought; and he had just agreed with her,

that perhaps our most exquisite sensations in a moonlight evening, arise from a general idea of the horrors and perils of night, while the stillness and heavenly radiance around us seem to give assurance of present security; when, upon emerging suddenly from the shade of some trees into an open space, that delicious sense of security was interrupted by their being nearly run over by Mr. Alderstoke. "Hollo! are you mad? Hollo! where are you going, Sir?" cried the gentleman. "Miss Cothelston, ought this person to be riding in the park now?"

Alderstoke, meantime, had with difficulty reined in his horse, and with at least as much difficulty suppressed an oath, that suggested itself as a suitable prelude to the few observations he had to make upon this rencontre. On discovering the parties, he did suppress it, however, and rallied them with some pleasantry, and much apparent good-humour, highly approving their taste for a moonlight ramble, and throwing in amid his badinage occasional complimentary remarks, applicable to each, which

they laughed at as a good joke, and were well enough disposed to take in earnest.

"I protest, though, Mr. Ullesbey," said the young lady, who, by the way, had been talking every thing but all, herself, "your conversation has been so bewitching, that I totally forgot how late it was. We must go in; for there's no understanding my father, I give you notice: in general I think, he has, pretty fairly, the liberal ideas of the present day; and yet, every now and then, one's great-great-grandmother could not have been more prudish and precise."

"Oh!—think not of giving up this seraphic evening," cried Alderstoke, bawling after them, as they walked away, with tone and air of bombast; "for aught so utterly terrestrial, as family rules:—

'The moon shines bright: in such a night as this,
'When the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees,
'And they did make no noise; in such a night,
'Troilus, methinks——'

but, perceiving they had now got out of

hearing, he pushed his mare to a trot again, muttering, "So, this selfish, heartless piece of affectation, can find no better amusement at present, than in making a fool of that boy."

Now, whether it fell out, that Mr. Cothelston's temper was seriously affected by his losses incurred through Mac-Eure's delinquency, or that, in spite of parental partiality, he had been obliged lately to compare his own daughters with sundry other young ladies, to the disadvantage of the former, in various points that materially affected his comfort; most sure it is, that he had more than twice expressed himself this evening in terms not very conciliatory towards them.

"Besides, I don't know how many times I have informed you, Jaqueline," said he, "that I will not have music-books laid upon this table."

"Bless my heart, what can it signify?" replied the damsel, in no remarkably engaging accents; her head being either employed upon the London expedition, which

was *not* to take place, or other subjects, as little satisfactory: " I have n't a notion who put them there, I declare and vow: and because I make some use of the music, it does not follow——"

" Miss Jaqueline Cothelston," said her father, raising his voice, " it follows, that you should not reply to me with petulance and impatience; that follows—or ought to follow, Miss Jaqueline." Mary Mac-Eure now took away the books.

" Thank you, my dear," said the Squire, " you are kind always, and civil; and why sense or talent should be considered as lowered by common urbanity of manners. I own I never could see. One thing I can see—that it is easy to be brusque, without much of either."

" Jaqueline, my love, what is the matter with your father, to-night?" observed Lady Annabella.

" Don't know," said the girl, shortly and huffishly; if she answered at all, which does not seem so clear.

" I confess, I wish, Lady Bella," said

Cothelston, now addressing his wife, "that my daughters were not encouraged to do every single individual thing in life, just as the whim happens to take them!"

"How do you mean, Mr. Cothelston?"

"'Tis pretty manifest, what I mean, surely. Why are they to be humoured in a freedom from all restraint, more than other unmarried women of their age? There's Clara, now, flaunting about all night long, out of doors, with that young man. I don't mean to say there's any positive harm in it, or to be apprehended from it; that would be silly: still less, do I blame Rupert Ullesbey; for if she proposed such folly, I am aware, he could hardly refuse."

"Bless me," said Lady Annabella, "I thought he was to be considered as an intimate friend of the family! Then, there's a moon,—is n't there,—or something? Oh, yes!" looking out of the window; "how very lovely! Do look, Mr. Cothelston. Clara, you know, would be ready to expire, unless she could get a stroll to enjoy it."

"That is just what I complain of,"

cried the Squire; "let any freak or inclination come across either of them, and they no more remember what I have laid down as a rule——"

"You are sometimes rather forgetful yourself, Mr. Cothelston," observed his lady.

"Come, now," cried the Squire, piqued, "come to the point, Ma'am. In what particular have I forgot, or neglected, my duty? I am ready to be informed; indeed, I am desirous to be informed."

"You never remembered," said she, "to have the rails in the plantation painted green."

"Heaven defend me!" cried Mr. Cothelston, flinging from her; "I do believe she labours under a natural incapacity of comprehending one's feelings."

By this time, however, it seemed that his pettishness was sufficiently exhausted; for when Ullesbey and his eldest daughter re-appeared, he took a book that had been handed to him by Miss Mac-Eure, and nodding to her in acknowledgment for the

attention, read on quietly, without further scolding or observation of any kind.

"I have no judgment whatever, in painting or drawing," observed Rupert, taking up a sketch of Mary Mac-Eure's performance; "but, do you know, this strikes me as done with great spirit."

"Why, then, I'm sorry that you are not a judge," said Mary laughing; "for I dote upon the amusement, and would be glad of encouragement."

"Mary might make something of it if she would take pains," said Miss Cothelston.

"Nay, I fear it is a worse case than that, Clara," replied the former. "If I fail, 't is for want of genius, and not trouble, I tell you fairly."

"Those are clever-ish sketches of Sir Poole Preston's, from 'As you like it,'" observed Miss Cothelston.

"I don't see that," said Jaqueline.

"Why not, pray?"

"Because they never answer one's ideas

of the forest of Ardennes, or the people in it," returned Jaqueline.

"One's ideas? Whose ideas?"

"My own," said Miss Jaqueline.

"I doubt, my dear," observed the eldest, "whether you have any clear ideas upon the subject.—I cannot help your looking angry; but the truth is, that in highly poetical descriptions it is nót so easy for common minds to form an adequate notion how they should be represented on paper or canvass: you should distrust yourself, therefore, and adopt the conception of the artist."

"When I say ideas, I mean expectations," replied Jaqueline.

"That change of word, I suspect, will hardly help you much,", continued the other: "besides, really, people's expectations are vague enough now and then. No, no—he has some cleverness, there is no denying that; though I dislike Sir Poole Preston myself."

"Mercy upon us! that is something new, surely," said the younger sister; "such

prodigious friends as you two seemed to be in the autumn of ninety-nine. I beg pardon, Clara; but did not he leave mamma's party, at the last Doncaster races, and join Lady Bolterhassett's?"

"How should I know any thing about it?" returned Miss Cothelston.

"Merely, my dear, because you were there, which I was not."

"Why should you take such fancies into your head?" said the elder. "Leave our party! No: only for a time, I suppose, if he did; and who upon earth cared if he had? I don't recollect, though, one way or t' other.

"Oh, your most obedient," replied Jaqueline.

"Less noise, pr'ythee!" cried Mr. Cothelston, at that moment knitting his brows over a note which had just been delivered to him, and which, when he had finished, he first crumpled up all into his hand, as if going to throw it behind the grate; then relented, opened it again, and, standing

forward, demanded the whole attention of the company.

"Be pleased, young ladies," said he, holding out the letter with extended arm, "to listen for one instant to this, before you persuade yourselves, which I see you are sufficiently ready to do, that my late misfortune can only inconvenience us for a while; after which there is to be as much or more money forthcoming than ever, for journeys, dress, London, and diversions. Hear only what Mr. Alderstoke, now tolerably cool and reasonable, says upon the matter." He then proceeded with the letter.

"DEAR SIR,

"Permit me, in the first place, to make my lowly apologies for having so far lost myself this morning upon the intelligence of this event—this sad event—to us all; which, I am assured, the same superior strength of mind that kept you calm while I was violent, and, I fear, misconducting myself, will readily induce you

to pardon: and not only that, Sir; but I venture to hope you will still deign to extend towards two unfortunate men, Mr. Holtofte and myself, that countenance and protection with which you have hitherto honoured us, and which——" ("Humph!" said Cothelston) "were never more necessary for us than upon this trying occasion."—("That I can very easily conceive," said the Squire.) "We are likely to be reviled, calumniated, persecuted, and ruined; for although we know, and you, Mr. Cothelston, full well know, that no such connexion, in the way of any trade or business, existed between us and that person whom it distresses me to name, as could give any one a claim, in law or common justice, against either of us——" ("Now here's what I call a good impudent assertion," observed the Squire, though he still went reading on)—"against either of us—still, many have lost considerable property—there's no denying it—by that man's scandalous conduct; and our reputations will be mercilessly sacrificed, unless you, Sir, great

sufferer as you are, almost the very greatest (ourselves excepted), will be magnanimous enough to set the example of patience under this misfortune, and continue, as I said before, your public countenance to my friend and me. Though not the shadow of obligation upon us exists, we would willingly do what we could, Sir; but we are beggars, Mr. Cothelston; and I do not at this time speak so particularly for my own benefit, as for the sake of that manly, honourable character, Holtofte." ("I like this, now," said the Squire; "this does him credit.") "Long, Sir, have I been acquainted with the virtues, the truly English virtues, of Mr. Holtofte's mind, who, under a not very polished exterior, perhaps, possesses a heart of inflex—" ("Well, well," cried Mr. Cothelston, passing over a line or two, and then resuming):—" and a friendship, my good Sir, has taken root in our bosoms——"

"Ah! but there's too much of all this," said the Squire, turning to the other side of the paper, where, after he had read a

little to himself, he suddenly took his eyes off the letter, and asking for Miss MacEure, was told that she had left the room just before he began with it.

"Poor girl!" said he, "highly natural she should. Let her be sent for, however, as what remains of this seems to concern her alone."

"I am not now going to distress you, Mary," he observed, when he had taken her into a room apart, "by reading the whole of Alderstoke's letter; but 't is necessary I should inform you that he has seen your mother since——since—all this unhappy business."

"I dare say he has," replied Mary.

"Why so?" her uncle asked.

"Because he is at Westerwolde very often, I apprehend."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Cothelston, not looking particularly delighted. "With her most days, do you say?"

"No, I did not mean to say that; but, to be sincere with you, Sir, I take him to be there full as often as my mother would

choose, if she were not under such essential obligations to him. Mr. Alderstoke has been zealous and active in serving her."

"Ay—perhaps he may:—rather so," said the Squire, after mumbling some unintelligible words not quite in assent, apparently, to her last remark. "But as to my sister's obligations—that 's the point, my dear girl, which we are to have a little talk about. I must first repeat, Mary, that the circumstance of your living here neither adds, nor can add, any thing worth notice to the expenses of an establishment like mine at Peterstow. You are extremely useful to me; and, as long as I can keep up that establishment at all, I shall insist upon this house remaining your home; nor will I ever hear any thing again of the sort of proposal you made this morning. But with equal candour I must let you know, that in continuing what I have hitherto done, for your mother's accommodation, I shall now expect some aid from you."

"Doubtless;—of course;—to be sure, uncle," cried Mary, colouring with very

eagerness. "Tell me only, I beseech you, what is fitting for me to do, and what is in my power; and with God's blessing, it shall be done, to your utmost satisfaction. Allow me, however, to observe, that I really did not know of my mother having been assisted—at all regularly assisted—that is, —by you, Sir, since the lamentable differences and separation in our family. I assure you, I thought that Mr. Alderstoke had supplied her with a residence, at least."

"True—but upon my paying him a rent for that old barn of a place, you will please to take with you."

"Can it be?"

"Do you doubt my word, Mary?"

"No—no," said she, with a smile, that she well knew would propitiate the Squire; "but I have my doubts on the subject. I can tell you, uncle Cothelston, I question much whether my mother is apprized of what you have just been saying."

"Pooh—pooh, child! she must be," returned Mr. Cothelston. "Do you imagine that any gentlemanlike, honourable

man (and Mr. Alderstoke is a man of family, recollect, though low in the world comparatively with his ancestors), could be so delicately employed, as he has been, between a brother and sister who have no personal intercourse; and that he would arrogate to himself a merit, beyond what belonged to him, in the transaction?"

"It is not to be supposed, one would hope," replied Miss Mac-Eure, as they returned to the rest, by this time all assembled in the supper-room; where they found, to Mr. Cothelston's surprise, and displeasure at first, an addition to the family circle, in Mr. Holtofte. Things turned out, however, as the latter had foreseen. Squire Cothelston now gave some immediate vent to his feelings, by a most freezing reception of one whom he had sufficient reason to think himself ill-used, if not defrauded, by; the fact undoubtedly being, that he had fallen into this scrape, as much through the representations of Alderstoke, not to add Holtofte, as those of his brother-in-law. But, after this petrifying reception,

Mr. Cothelston felt relieved, by having got over an uneasy duty; and as (though far from allowing it to himself) he had, in truth, a strong disinclination to cast off two humble friends, whose acuteness frequently amused, and was, in some respects, of service to him, while their entire subserviency kept his pride easy; by degrees he resumed something of his accustomed courtesy. It is even affirmed, that he went such lengths, before supper was over, as, not indeed to ask Mr. Holtofte downright to take a glass of wine with him, but to join a party, consisting of that person and young Ullesbey, and to nod rather than bow to Holtofte when he drank. The latter, having thus far carried his point, had the judgment not to stay very long, though quite long enough to astonish Rupert no little in the course of his conversation; for, mention being made of Mr. Alderstoke, his particular friend seemed wretchedly faint and sparing in his commendations; and as the topic proceeded, during which Holtofte had dissipated all remaining re-

serve by sundry bumpers of Port, he absolutely indulged himself (for an indulgence it appeared to be) in sharp and satirical reflections against him. Mr. Cothelston attempted to reprove these sallies by quotations from Alderstoke's letter, wherein, as we have seen, the other was daubed, and doubly daubed, with encomiums; to which Holtofte, however, made no reply, but by a look of such perfect contempt, as Ullesbey thought expressed even more than his sarcasms.

CHAPTER VI.

In the course of the following fortnight or three weeks, Rupert met with abundant opportunities of becoming well acquainted with both Holtofte and Alderstoke; but he only improved his intimacy with the latter, whose civility and suavity of manner was attractive; whereas, he thought the other a low saturnine vulgar man, notwithstanding a degree of cunning that enabled him to regulate his behaviour to the general satisfaction of Mr. Cothelston. With Alderstoke, however, he had made various expeditions about the country; and having determined to be pleased with him, he kept pretty steadily to his resolution, but could not altogether conceal from himself, that his new friend, though engaging in his deportment, was somewhat close and reserved, and when urged to talk, so perpetually con-

tradicted former opinions which Ullesbey had heard him deliver at Peterstow, and so invariably acquiesced in whatever our young friend suggested (provided it was matter of *opinion only)*, that Rupert thought him, if not an insincere, a weak man, and by observation of many little incidents, felt convinced that he was a very timid one, moreover.

Soon after breakfast, on a certain Friday morning, Ullesbey declared his intention to ride, and Mr. Alderstoke said he should have much pleasure in accompanying him, but that his only horse had met with a strain. "If so," observed Rupert, "we can put it off to another day."

"We must, perforce," said the other, "unless—— but, there,—by this time, you know the neighbourhood perfectly; you can pick out a good ride for yourself, and I shall be ready to join you again,—we'll say the day after to-morrow, or some day at the end of the week, perhaps."

"But you pronounced the word 'unless,'" replied Rupert; "unless what?"

"Oh, nothing: it only came into my head, that I thought I had heard Mr. Cothelston offer you the use of the gig of a morning.

"Yes, yes, so he has," cried Ullesbey, "over and over again, and so kindly, that I am certain he really means me to take it whenever I choose. Come, then, the gig for ever: we'll have him, by the pope; and I'm a consummate whip."

Alderstoke bowed acknowledgment to that last assertion with a smile, but something of an incredulous smile.

"Where shall we go?" said Rupert.

"I doubt, Mr. Ullesbey, whether I have shown you Crowtonglass, yet."

"Is there any thing in Crowtonglass? Just a horrid filthy sea-port town, I suppose," replied the youth.

"Bless your heart, no! you are much mistaken there, Sir," said the other; "I know few common towns better worth seeing."

"Now,— what is to be seen?"

"Oh,—why,—a vast deal: some ex-

ceedingly curious old houses; and then, there's a fine place belonging to Sir Poole Preston."

"I know that, but it's more than a mile from the town," replied Ullesbey.

"It forms a good object, though," said Alderstoke, "from Crowtonglass, where I have some very particular business."

"Nay, if you have any thing to do there, Mr. Alderstoke, that alters the case, and I make no further opposition. How soon shall you be ready? Twenty guineas to twelve I drive you over within the three quarters of an hour."

"Gentlemen of your age," said Alderstoke, still shrinking from that proposal, "are frequently expert charioteers, I am aware; but apt to be very adventurous."

"Well, then, you may drive me," returned Ullesbey; and passing over the implied doubt as to his coachmanship, with remarkably good humour, he walked round forthwith to the stables to order their vehicle. Rupert's desire, as the gig rattled along, was to talk over the house of Co-

thelston ; not only from the ordinary temptation that besets us all, to be passing our judgment upon those we are in habits of living with, but because it constituted his principal diversion at present, to fancy himself in love with the eldest daughter ; and true it is, that a profound flirtation had gone on between them almost from the minute of his arrival at Peterstow. Before they had fairly embarked upon the subject, however, Mr. Alderstoke excited Rupert's indignation in no small degree, by speaking, as he thought, slightingly, of the heart, or understanding, or both, of the female part of the family, without any exception in favour of the only one whom he cared about: but upon immediate and zealous remonstrance, he was as speedily relieved, by finding he had totally misunderstood that gentleman, who professed so decided an admiration of the daughters, of Miss Cothelston especially, for wit, beauty, application, strength of mind, and Heaven knows what other perfections, as entirely satisfied Ullesbey ; more particularly when

his suspicions of a little insincerity at first, were set aside by a hit or two more, which his companion (perceiving it would do) still ventured at Lady Annabella.

"I agree with you implicitly, Mr. Alderstoke," said Rupert, with as conciliating a tone and look as he could assume; "my only possible doubt would have been about the propriety of the term 'strength of mind;' I don't exactly see how that can be a quality much required from, or applicable to, young women in their situation."

"More necessary for women than men, a devil of a deal," returned the other: "consider how they are brought up; how long they are kept in leading-strings, as it were; and the opportunities that grand-mammas, good ladies, maiden aunts, and those sort of people have, of instilling into girls every sort of prejudice. I was pleased now, with the eldest, the other night—I was, Mr. Ullesbey, almost as much pleased as you yourself could be, for affirming so frankly that Mahometanism might be a very good system for those born where it

happens to prevail, and produce as happy lives, great actions, and delightful expectations, as—as—any other system."

"I never heard her make any such observation," replied Ullesbey; "neither can I agree with her, if she did, I am free to confess."

"Can't you?" said Alderstoke, drily.

"No: not that I mean to say, taken suddenly in this manner, that I wish to enter into an argument about it; but surely no one at liberty to consult his reason. could believe in Mahomet's pretensions, upon his word only, after his impure life and—"

"Alas! my dear Sir," said the other. "what is it that we *can* believe?" Now, there was much in this that jarred with Ullesbey's feelings; for though we are afraid he was as careless upon important subjects as many other lads of his age and circumstances, his own earliest education had been a valuable and honest one, and he had by no means got over the original horror with which any position savouring

of deliberate scepticism was used to affect him.

"I know not how you may consider it," he answered with some warmth; "but I can perfectly believe whatever is attested by more than human power, and handed down to us through an unbroken chain of evidence, which the shrewdest understandings have often attacked, but never yet been equal to shake; and such, I venture to affirm, is the case with——"

"Very much so," said Alderstoke, stopping him short; "but you push my remark further than ever I meant it should go. Look to your right, Mr. Ullesbey,—to your right, Sir;—there, is what meets my idea of a noble sea-view! And the Molesden woods,—d'ye see?—stretching beautifully down to the very beach!"

They now put up the gig at a house, which, as Mr. Alderstoke observed, had all the character of antiquity; and not merely that (as it struck Rupert), but every conceivable inconvenience to be expected at a wretched forsaken old inn, rather deserving

to be called an alehouse, the haunt of the lowest orders,—fishermen and smugglers more especially. Between this respectable hotel and the sea, was a narrow long street, generally consisting of paltry shops, but which terminated in some very high houses, the craggy bank whereon the last stood being washed by the spring tides. In front of these, and more close than to be at all desirable, were established certain black-looking wooden cabins, that seemed like houses on wheels, but each inhabited by a family at the least.

Before one of these huts Mr Alderstoke made a halt, and asked for John Waugh, who proved to be within. The former, then expressing his conviction that Rupert would find plenty of things to amuse him about the town, or its environs, for about half an hour perhaps, during which he had himself some trifling matter to settle; proceeded to the interior of the cabin, without further ceremony. Ullesbey, thus left to his own devices, turned down a shabbier alley, if possible, than that where he had been

already, and advancing upon a high footway, whose jagged and uneven stones absolutely overhung the middle of the street, picking his way cautiously lest he should stumble upon sundry skaite, or other coarse fish, thrown down before most of the dwellings; overtook three gentlemen, carelessly, but very fashionably attired, as he was quick enough to perceive; and the pavement not being sufficiently broad to permit him to pass them, he necessarily kept pretty close behind. Every body made room for these imposing figures, and almost all touched their hats as they stalked on, taking up the whole way, and from a mere sense of consequence and superiority (we conceive), laughing as loud and heartily as if—there had been any thing to laugh at. There was a great high cart standing in the body of the street, and a child in it, considerably discomposed, apparently, if one might judge by his crying and blubbering, which much increased as this trio approached.

"What's the matter with you—you sprite?" said the gentleman in the middle.

"Oh dear! oh dear! help me out of this," roared the boy. "Do help me out o' the cart."

"How did you get there?" said the gentleman.

"Mr. White put me up," cried the brat.

"Then, I'll tell you what, my young buck; Mr. White may come and take you down again."

Here ensued a louder roar than ever.

"That is so like him," said the friend on his right.

"So uncommonly like Preston," said the friend on his left.

Nobody knew better than Ullesbey, from frequent observation at the university, that the good things which fall from the head of a set, are not to be too rigidly canvassed; and feeling that he had, as yet, but a small acquaintance himself, few people could be more impressed with the advantages of Sir Poole Preston's fortune,

consequence, figure, and even self-satisfaction and impudence.

Rupert had no sensation of envy, whatever, nor the least desire to withhold due admiration: still, under all its circumstances, he could not entirely enter into the spirit of that last humorous sally, nor did he pass by the poor yelping urchin, as the rest had done: on the contrary, he lifted him out of the cart, and setting him upon his legs in the street, left him as happy as a game at "fox gives warning" with four or five other dirty little blackguards, could make him.

"Before Ullesbey got up again with the party ahead of him, he observed them stop and greet Mr. Alderstoke, who having finished his own concerns sooner than was expected, had returned from the sea-side by the main street of the place, which, at the turning of a corner, brought him immediately in presence of Sir Poole and his friends.

Alderstoke likewise saw Rupert at some distance off, and it seems probable made a

remark thereon; for all the three strangers faced about at once, rather to our youth's embarrassment, for the purpose of reconnoitring him; and Rupert, as he came pretty close, heard the baronet's concluding words, addressed to Mr. Alderstoke:

"His son, hey! oh, yes; Colonel Ullesbey was a person much in request. I have seen him, indeed I knew him a little: a good style of man, Sir, certainly."

Alderstoke now officiated as master of the ceremonies; looking pleasant, and stretching out his arms from one to the other.

"Sir Poole, let me introduce Mr. Ullesbey. Mr. Ullesbey, Captain Hopmeister. Mr. Ullesbey, Mr.——:" not knowing the third gentleman's name, he grumbled out something, that might have been Antrobus, or any other name you please; and every body bowed. Rupert liked the baronet best, because the other two were disposed to be stiff, till they had ascertained how he would take with their friend; but as he

was well received by Sir Poole, Ullesbey soon liked them all tolerably; and after he had duly replied to the questions, how long he had been in the county, how far he was pleased with it, whether he had seen this great house and the other, and how it happened that he came to be disporting himself in the town of Crowtonglass? Sir Poole Preston proposed to show him Molesden, and suggested, that they should return thither immediately, as it was only a short walk, and they might order their gig round to the house. Rupert said a few indistinct words about kindness, honour, trouble, and getting home to dinner; but the baronet was not easily put off, when he had a mind to exhibit his place; so to Molesden they marched. A most exquisite situation unquestionably! which Rupert praised as highly, and what was still better, manifested as much visible delight in, as the proprietor could have desired.

Much time was occupied in seeing the grounds; and when they returned to the house, Ullesbey found that their carriage

had been waiting an hour and more: he was, therefore, for sliding off; a movement which Sir Poole declared totally inadmissible, before they had taken some refreshment, and that refreshment was soon explained to mean their dinner; the baronet, as he informed them, dining very early at that time of year, for the advantage of riding or sailing in the evening. Rupert felt somewhat vexed at this.

"We must go back," said he apart to Alderstoke, "because I never told our people there would be the slightest chance of my being away at dinner."

"Ah! you see, he insists upon it," replied the other.

"I cannot help that," rejoined Rupert; "for it seems to me, that 't would be positively uncivil by the Cothelstons. I only put it to you, Sir; what do you really think?"

"You see, he has set his heart upon the thing," said his companion.

Ullesbey gave way now, having in reality no disinclination to the measure him-

self, but only marvelling that Mr. Alderstoke should so readily acquiesce; and to say the truth, he thought him rather mean in so doing; for it was clear that Sir Poole treated him without any respect or delicacy whatever; jesting unmercifully upon Mac-Eure's late flight from the country, which had involved so many (Alderstoke particularly, in distress, that he was perpetually groaning and complaining under), and felicitating himself, that he had always distrusted their speculations, and lost nothing by the cabal: of course including one of his present guests in that appellation. As to Rupert, he was personally, in good charity with the baronet, whose easy, flippant familiarity, upon so slight an acquaintance, pleased, more than it annoyed him, especially as his pertness was interlarded with a species of something between ridicule and flattery, not often unacceptable to young persons; with allusions, for instance, to the rout that must be made about such an inmate by those girls at Peterstow, to his throwing the

handkerchief, their pulling caps, and so on. The dinner was handsome, unostentatious, gentlemanlike, and very luxurious. They talked of cookery; on which science Sir Poole Preston laid down the law ; Captain Hopmeister knew something, and fancied he knew a great deal more; but Mr. Alderstoke, though in terms he contradicted nobody, proved clearly that he was the learned one of the party, and supported his intelligence in theory by unremitted exertion. Some Burgundy being produced and excessively commended, their host got into exalted spirits, his heart overflowed, and he called for bottle after bottle of the same wine all through the evening. Sir Poole now showed off, and rattled away; while the rest soaked, and laughed, and shouted, and applauded, without any hypocrisy on the part of Ullesbey, at least; for the baronet had much anecdote, and if not absolutely clever, was lively, brisk, and confident. Indeed our young friend himself opened in the course of this brilliant afternoon, and told two stories with

some effect. He knew three more, but with admirable tact, for which, in his present exhilaration, we cannot too highly commend him, he considered that they all had reference, somehow or other, to the university; and as the two already given were his best, in his own opinion even, he concluded that perhaps it might be as well to suppress the others. Every body else, by this time, began to hold forth and shine without reserve; and, for the most part, all together: every body, that is to say, with the exception of Mr. Alderstoke, who, as Rupert could not but take notice, though he kept the thing up as far as laughter and gestures would go, became more silent, in proportion to the vociferation of the rest, and was the first to propose their return; a point that he carried with difficulty, and not till after a compromise as to one more bottle. Rupert, possessing himself of the reins on their way back, contrary to Alderstoke's intention (though he could not well again oppose it), chattered away faster if possible than the people at Molesden; and

as his companion contented himself with dry assents to the panegyrics poured forth upon the baronet's address, and hospitality, and looks, and cellar, and cook, and heavenly views from different situations in his grounds; he had the conversation pretty much to himself; Alderstoke never once uttering what could be called a complete sentence, till after their arrival at a place where a broad green track, used occasionally by carts, led into the wood from the road which they were returning by, and which skirted it entirely. Rupert here announced himself disposed to make a little experiment, and try a shorter way home; in pursuance of which, he was actually urging the horse into the green lane.

"Stop, stop, Mr. Ullesbey," cried the other, attempting to secure the reins; "that 's no road. There 's no road, I tell you. Upon my soul, he 's drunk!"

That charge, not remarkably pleasant at any time, assorts worst of all with one's feelings when there happens to be some foundation for it: accordingly, Ullesbey

slashed away forward with less reserve than ever.

"By Jove, we shall be upset," continued Alderstoke. "Don't, don't, my good Sir; do not go on, Mr. Ullesbey, for your own sake as well as mine. Upon my honour—I shall esteem it a favour—a serious favour—if you will turn into the road again."

Rupert had little of obstinacy in his disposition; and if that request had been made of a morning, Mr. Alderstoke, according to every probability, would have prevailed, without the tone of distress, either, that attended his supplication; but unluckily, at present, the term "drunk" had escaped him; besides, a train of thought came across Ullesbey's mind, suggesting, that, notwithstanding his soft and obsequious manners, the other had somehow contrived to carry every one of his points, upon every one occasion, since they had been in the habit of going out together. Our collegian, therefore, determined upon an exception just in this instance; and his

mind being made up, he continued to show that determination pretty decidedly.

"Sir, I must say," observed Mr. Alderstoke, "that this conduct is vastly disagreeable to me.—'T is pitch dark now, I'll be hanged if it is n't. Sir, if I assure you, that I have a most accurate knowledge of this track, and that I am certain we shall be overturned further on, in an uncommonly dangerous place, I presume you will not persevere."

"Go along, go along," said Rupert to the horse, stamping upon the foot-board, and making his voice as like as he could to that of Jem Oliver, who, in those days, drove the heavy Birmingham; then turning to his uncomfortable partner,

"My dear Mr. Alderstoke, you tremble: how immensely ridiculous! I'll bring you through in style, mind me, if I don't."

"This shall never happen again," said the other, in a manner plainly enough proving that he did not say all he felt. But just then the wheel of the gig stuck fast in a

deep rut, and Alderstoke could no longer speak for distress and impatience.

"I know whereabouts we are perfectly well," said Ullesbey. "You see something white—don't you?—Upon our left? That 's a bit of rock, Sir; a nice picturesque bit, I can tell you, if we had better light; and behind it there 's a kind of cave."

"Just give him a lash, now, and we shall free the wheel in a moment," said Alderstoke. "Do, do, or let me have the whip."

"There 's a fellow watching us," said Ullesbey.

"Nonsense!" cried the other.

"I thought there was, I protest. And so, I solemnly declare, there is!" returned Rupert, rising up; while at the same instant some one was heard rushing from them. "The dog meant us no good, and I 'll be after him," he continued, still warm with wine.

"No! no!" cried Alderstoke, with great vehemence, and endeavouring to hold

him in by force; "you will get into trouble; you 'll be murdered."

But restraint was out of the question: Rupert jumped down, chased vigorously, and thought he had driven the man either into the cave (which he knew not to be a deep one), or under the rock, when a loud voice, with a tremendous curse, forbad him to approach; and some sort of fire-arms went off so close before him, that the powder singed his cheek. This reception brought Master Ullesbey a little to himself. He paused. A loud long whistle immediately followed. He retired, therefore, a step or two; and as Mr. Alderstoke still kept roaring and hallooing, reiterating his assurances that he would be murdered, and bawling to him to give over the pursuit, our friend judged it expedient to return to the gig. Alderstoke, whom the vicissitudes of fortune had once more made the charioteer, now exerted himself to some purpose. At one plunge their steed, a very strong serviceable animal, got the carriage clear of the rut, and away they dash-

ed towards Peterstow; the present driver totally forgetful, apparently, of the perilous situation further on, where he had prophesied their downfall. Ullesbey's head, additionally bewildered by this most unexpected occurrence, now grew so confused, that it was some time before he could ask his companion an intelligible question, and still longer before he could procure an answer, when he did: for Mr. Alderstoke had waxed deadly wrathful, as he would have taken care to let Rupert know, had he not felt morally certain that the other cared not a fig whether he was pleased or displeased.

"Nay then, Sir, if you do not choose to talk, you may sit silent for me," said Ullesbey, rather irritated, in his turn, at such sullenness. But Mr. Alderstoke now began to think he had gone full far in the demonstration of his ill temper.

"I should guess, Mr. Ullesbey," said he, "that you have hardly lived much on a comparatively retired part of the coast. Your experience of the country bordering

upon the sea, is confined, I suspect, to crowded watering-places, abounding with all the comforts and conveniences of London, and a well-regulated police amongst the number. Things are somewhat different here. How the large and constantly increasing population of our towns and straggling villages may subsist, I, for one, do neither profess to be very accurately informed, nor do I hold it particularly wise to be too inquisitive upon the subject: I would warn you, however, against these woods, of a night."

"That warning seems odd from you, Sir," replied Rupert, "and the rather, because you must doubtless recollect the hour at which I surprised you once, taking a solitary walk hereabouts."

"To be sure," returned the other, tartly, not to say fretfully; "and what could give one a better opportunity, I should be glad to know, of gaining a little insight into the lawless proceedings, which I affirm (you will believe me or not, as you please) to be the practice of the neighbourhood; not

every night, possibly, but most nights. I own I have been in the habit of strolling about these woods much later than was prudent; but will give you free leave to rob me yourself if you catch me doing it again."

"I wonder," said Rupert, "whether that fellow fired at me in real earnest? A narrow escape if he did, faith! By the way, Mr. Alderstoke, according to your report, yonder cottage would not be so desirable a residence," pointing to the only one in that part of the wood, which they were pretty near to just at this time, and distinguished by a light in the window. "That hut can scarce be the securest habitation in the three kingdoms——the united kingdom, I mean," added he, thinking it becoming to be accurate and unhurried, after what had recently occurred; "who lives there?"

"You must have heard twenty times," said Alderstoke.

"No doubt; but I forget."

"A poor man of the name of Waugh."

"The same that you inquired for at Crowtonglass?"

"Yes, Sir," said Alderstoke.

"Then he sports two houses?"

To this Mr. Alderstoke did not, seemingly, feel himself called on to make any reply.

"He's a buck!" observed Ullesbey, "with a town and country seat. Is he a fisherman?"

"Ha! ha! ha!" returned the other. "A buck indeed!"

"Is he a fisherman?" continued Rupert.

"Yes, Sir," said Mr. Alderstoke; and here all conversation dropped upon their entering Peterstow park, safe and sound. They found Squire Cothelston somewhat ruffled; his bow to Ullesbey was of the stateliest, and of his companion he took no notice whatever.

It could be of no imaginable consequence, the Squire observed, where they had dined, provided Mr. Ullesbey had been well entertained; and that, he heartily

hoped, was the case: a liberal way of taking the thing, which he repeated as soon as the latter began to apologize, with the addition, that in some houses it might be an object to the master and mistress to have it ascertained whether or not their guests returned to dinner of a day; but at Peterstow, that did not signify the least upon the face of the earth, any farther indeed, than as such a piece of attention would have been considered civil. Miss Jaqueline, meanwhile, with a little volume of Metastasio in her hand, particularly neatly bound, sat prim: Mary MacEure was not present; being much depressed and harassed in mind since this affair of her father, she had kept a good deal to herself of late; and Lady Annabella evidently had not troubled, and did not trouble her head, whether Rupert were present or absent.

Clara, indeed, fully purposed to show that she was far—very far — from being pleased, though rather hurt than offended; till perceiving that Ullesbey's spirits were

unusually elevated, and collecting from his conversation that his mind was entirely going, either upon their neighbour the baronet's house and good things, or his own subsequent adventures; insomuch, that he took no more notice of her deportment, than he would of the cat's, had she been in the room; the young lady thought it as well to rest contented with the gratification of her curiosity, and begged that Mr. Cothelston would at least permit the gentlemen to explain all that had happened to detain them. Then the whole came out, and, at length, was listened to; nor would it have cost the Squire much effort to recover his serenity, he being full ready to allow, that (if Sir Poole Preston thought proper to lay an embargo upon them) he well knew, "No," would never be taken for an answer; only, unhappily, all was spoilt again by the event between Molesden and his own house.

"Then there is something unpleasant brewing up at my very park gate," said he; "I scolded Betty and Ann for spreading

such mischievous reports; and upon my life there is more in them than I thought. Do be quiet——" to Lady Annabella, who, at the other end of the room, had commenced a longer oration than was usual with her, about danger, disturbances, conspiracies, and removing to London. "I must make some inquiries." He rang the bell pretty violently, and in less than a second rang it again, as if the house was on fire.

"I do wish," said he to the servant, who had made his appearance as quickly as possibility allowed him, "that for once in my life I could get a bell answered when I ring it. 'Tis Spelman I want, send him up immediately. I shall certainly turn away both the kitchen-maid and under house-maid," he observed to the butler, when the latter came in, "for strolling about the country after dark."

"Why, I assure you, Sir, it only was by accident that they happened to be out last Tuesday: they are good decent girls, both of them, depend on it, Sir. They're

as stay-at-home girls, as ever I knew in a family, and would n't have been out so late, then, but I gave 'em leave, myself, to go and pass the afternoon with Ann Ryecott's mother,—a matter of five miles off."

"Well,—but they might have known better, than to stay till that time of night, and then come back unprotected."

"I ask your pardon, Sir, but that was n't the case, indeed."

"Who was with them, then?"

"Knype the tanner's second son; Long Knype, as they call him."

"Long Knype! so much the worse. He's perfectly unknown to me: some loose disorderly fellow, I dare say. Who besides?"

"Nobody else, Sir."

"Oh,—now, Spelman, I want you to tell me, plainly and circumstantially, what it really was that so terrified these silly people in the wood hard by."

"And I give you my word, Sir," said the butler, half-laughing, "that it's what I cannot undertake to do. You had better

Sir, talk once more to the girls themselves, for I pay very little attention to such stories, and all I can say is, that sadly frightened they were. Somebody played tricks, with intent to frighten 'em, I suppose: that 's my opinion of it, Sir."

Mr. Cothelston mused for a moment, and then told him, that Mr. Ullesbey had been shot at not an hour ago: which intelligence, Spelman, a decent, sensible man, was at first somewhat reluctant to believe. At length, he observed, that if there were in truth any irregular nightly meetings in those woods, 't would be much if John Waugh could not say a word or two about them.

"Very true:—as sure as you are born: very true, Spelman. Let him make his appearance here, directly after breakfast,—no,—before breakfast, to-morrow morning."

Mr. Alderstoke now attempted to explain things, by the same insinuations concerning the ill habits of the neighbourhood, that he had before thrown out, to Ullesbey; but it would not do. Cothelston insisted, that,

although there were plenty quite bad enough, among the lower people, many smugglers certainly,—yet the sort of circumstances that now engaged their attention, either arose (he was positive) from foolish sport and wantonness altogether, or the matter lay far deeper than they had any idea of. Alderstoke, according to his custom, did not dispute that doctrine, though he seemed, by the smile with which he listened, to hold it in no great estimation; and soon after took his departure; Mr. Cothelston neither offering him a bed, nor the other expressing any apprehension of being molested in his walk home across the park.

CHAPTER VII.

WHETHER extravagantly early rising was the general practice of Messrs. Alderstoke and Holtofte, does not appear by any of the documents from which this history has been compiled; though it seems rational to suppose that they were not to be seen, all the year round, up, dressed, and abroad, before five in the morning. Such an exhibition, however, they certainly made, on the day subsequent to that dinner at Molesden house, which we spoke of in the last chapter; and for some good reason or other, probably from a desire to gain a little more insight into Alderstoke's late adventure in those parts, they directed their steps towards a certain cottage in the wood that we have heard of, occupied by one Waugh. They were talking eagerly all the way, and apparently differing; Mr. Alderstoke endeavour-

ing, with his accustomed arts and cajolerie, to get some business done, that lay upon his mind, and Mr. Holtofte, from no less amiable motives than a spirit of perverseness, and a delight in fretting one of the most sensitive tempers that he had ever been conversant with,—refusing, or procrastinating. In the course of this very amiable discussion, all that had happened yesterday was repeatedly touched upon, and they talked of young Ullesbey; whom Holtofte abused, while the other appeared, if any thing, disposed to defend him. "I am not taken in, by this," said Holtofte; "and only wonder how you can fancy I should be. What stuff! you hate him worse than I do, I know perfectly well, at this moment."

"You have a vast deal of penetration," answered the other, quietly enough; but feeling, at the same time, how excessively he should like to cut his throat upon the spot; a feeling, that from the deep malignity of his look when he spoke, of which he most likely remained unconscious, was less

concealed from his companion than Mr. Alderstoke intended.

"Seriously, though, he's a troublesome coxcomb,—is he not?" continued Holtofte.

"Ye—s,—in some points, perhaps," returned the former; "but a gentleman-like young man."

"Ah,—gentleman-like!" replied Holtofte, sneering; "but look ye,—who comes here? Odso!—we're destined to have one precious rascal in company, at any rate, if we had none before."

A tall, broad-shouldered, sallow-looking peasant, of a complexion that had originally been fair, or rather white, with a light-coloured wide-brimmed straw hat on, dressed in a corderoy jacket, and lower articles of the same, whose long visage was plentifully seared by the small-pox, and whose entire cast of features expressed but little of the hearty rustic honesty that engages our good will, before we have made acquaintance with a man,—now became visible, at the end of a long vista, in the same path with our associates; and in a

slouching, staggering gait, almost as if he had been drunk prematurely that morning, he made his way to join them.

"As I live,—the Sieur Jean de Waugh!" cried Holtofte. "Well,—and where's your bow, man! are those your manners?"

"I am not fond, in particular," said Waugh, with much of a foreign accent, though speaking English as intelligibly as was necessary, on all occasions, "of the jest and gibe, at all; but if it will be that I must have it, I would so soon such liberty was took by the gentleman here," pointing to Alderstoke, and laying an emphasis upon his last word but one, "as by yourself, Mr. Holtofte."

"I admire your impudence!" said Holtofte, with a preface of more than one oath, or two. "Do you mean to say, that I am no gentleman?"

"And suppose—if I do—," retorted the other.

"Look ye here, Waugh," said Mr. Holtofte; "you have taken it into your head to be saucy to me, for ever so long" (red-

dening with anger); "and now, I'll be cursed if I don't put a stop to it. You're a bigger man than I am; but, for half a farthing, I'd break every bone in your skin."

"You shall deserve more than half the farthing to do that, Sir;" replied the other.

"Do you repeat, then, that I am not a gentleman?" said Holtofte, approaching him with clenched fist.

"What on earth are you going to risk? You must be positively deranged, Holtofte," cried Mr. Alderstoke, interposing briskly and authoritatively; an interference, to which the fisherman seemed inclined to submit, as indeed did Mr. Holtofte, after about a minute's consideration.

"I was willing to suppose," observed the latter, "that in general I had as fair a command over myself as many others; but there is something so provoking in the spitefulness of that fellow's insolence!"

"Oh, Dick,—Dick," said Alderstoke, "have you never tempted the patience of any body else, in the same manner? do try and recollect."

"Faith,—that may be true enough," replied the other, turning to Waugh, with a more amicable face; "so, John, you are sent for over to Peterstow, I hear."

"Ay,—that is what I am," returned Waugh: "he sends for this, and he sends for the other: he is what you call the very great man,—that Mr. Cothelston, there."

"Never you mind," said Alderstoke; "you had best attend; for, to be making him your enemy, would never do. Come along, then; we are walking, I believe, pretty much your way, and one may be able to give a guess what you are likely to be questioned about."

Mr. Cothelston, it should be remarked, hated trouble of any continuance, while he nevertheless had as strong a disposition to be superintending, not only his own concerns, but those of his neighbours, to know accurately whatever was going on, and to keep every thing in the sort of order and regularity that should extort the praise of the county, as if he had not been indolent by nature, and capable merely of exertion

by fits and caprice. These conflicting tastes worried him no little upon the present occasion: he lay tossing about, and, half-dreaming, half-reflecting, was so tormented by the symptoms of disquiet thus near to his own dwelling, in addition to a constant sense of the inconveniences which his brother-in-law had brought upon him, that he reaped but scanty benefit in the nature of refreshment, from that night's sleep, and in the morning was fain to have recourse to Spelman the butler, whom he convened in council without delay. Now, Spelman pretty well understood his master; and aware that as much real assistance was wanted as he could contrive to give, talked, in this situation of affairs, with his customary deference and propriety, in language, but the utmost freedom, in substance; and represented it as an act of extreme inconsideration in the Squire, to have permitted Mr. Mac-Eure to fasten such a tenant upon him, as that man, Waugh; who, having got possession of one of Mr. Cothelston's cottages, would not, in all likelihood, be

turned out again, without considerable difficulty and expense.

"What's the harm of him, Spelman?" said his master.

"Sir, if nothing will satisfy you, short of answering that question, I can't undertake to do it;" returned the butler. "I may feel it my duty perhaps, to say before you, Sir, what I would not say below; and I have an ill opinion of him, it's most certain: but 'tis another thing to bring forward any flat charge against him."

"If he has so bad a character," said Mr. Cothelston, "why did Mac-Eure make such a point of establishing him there? Why was he so perpetually——" Here he stopped, struck, and probably answered, by some of his own reflections.

"Yes, Sir," observed the butler; "and why did Mr. Mac-Eure,—I hope no offence, Sir,—do a great many things that he might as well have let alone? How he, or any of them, might make use of this man, I cannot take upon me to say; but, if I may be so free,—it was always a matter to me of

the greatest surprise in the world, that two gentlemen, like Mr. Mac-Eure and Mr. Alderstoke, could have to do with such scamps as Waugh, and some others."

"Spelman,—Spelman, you will consider that Mr. Holtofte is a frequent guest at this house."

"I do, Sir; and it's on that account that I'm not talking of Mr. Holtofte, good or bad; I don't say one word about him."

"He is not a gentleman, I admit," said the Squire, as if thinking aloud, but still willing that Spelman, of whose advice he was availing himself, should hear him; "but he has valuable qualities, and a kind of sincerity, in his way. Well, Spelman, you seem deep in thought."

"I was thinking, Sir, just this; that if it wasn't Mr. Holtofte who brought Waugh amongst us, and took him by the hand first of any one,—I must have been in a monstrous mistake this—ever so long, that's all. The other gentleman set him up in his (or rather, Sir, your) cottage, 'tis true; but they two had a tiff, afterwards."

"Who is this now coming across the lawn?" said the Squire.

"Our man, Sir, I've a notion:" and that the butler spoke accurately, was speedily proved, by the addition to their conference of that ill-favoured ungainly figure, John Waugh the fisherman. Mr. Cothelston did not feel remarkably well disposed towards him, from what he had heard already, nor were his prejudices removed, either by the man's appearance, tone of voice, or behaviour; for, if he came into the room without his hat on, it was all that could be said, as every gesture of courtesy in the form of a bow, he seemed utterly to disdain.

"I desired to speak with you, Waugh," said Mr. Cothelston, "because you are the only inhabitant of the part of my woods, where, I am told, some suspicious, and indeed, violent proceedings, have lately been carried on of a night. Two of my servants had their lives threatened near the spot where you live, scarcely a week since; and a ruffian of some sort, after using the most

outrageous language, actually fired at a young gentleman who is staying at this house, no longer ago than last night.'

"Fired! Aha! That is rough work to be sure," replied Waugh.

"This is no jesting matter," observed Mr. Cothelston.

"It was better jest, may be, for the shooter than for the t'other."

"Don't reply to Mr. Cothelston in that impudent manner, Sir," said Spelman, now coming forward in his principal's relief; "I tell you what, my man;—if there's sufficient reason for supposing you to be concerned in any unlawful or irregular practices yourself,—my master's a magistrate, and you'll be committed to gaol, as certainly as you stand there."

"This is your English law and liberty, I do fancy," replied Waugh; "for to send a man to prison, unless he can tell you every thing what you want to know. I am not a servant to you, Mr. Cothelston, nor I am not a servant's drudge to you, Mr. Spelman: zounds, man! what, you go for to

browbeat people, and for to insult people! I am independent; I do pay for my dwelling; I do get my own living, and I have never asked nothing from this house, nor the parish neither."

"Nor is it so clear that we should be inclined to maintain you, if you did," observed Mr. Cothelston: "you are a foreigner, Waugh;—what countryman are you?"

"A Dane," said the other, sullenly.

"Do you know any thing of the transactions I have been speaking of,—or do you not? And are you disposed to tell what you know,—or are you not?"

"You do question me, Sir, and question me, as if I was to be the thief and prisoner at your feet, and you are to be the great judge. Yet I will not, perhaps, have any objection to say, that for the last fortnight or so,—no more dangerous bad place in all the island, than just near about me: I was threaten, myself, many's the time; and was shot at, in my own house, where is the

mark of one ball, now, as I can be ready to show."

Mr. Cothelston here cast an eager glance at Spelman, whose look, however, was but incredulous.

"How lately did all this happen, Mr. Waugh?" said the butler.

"Wednesday night, last, it was."

"My master will probably come over to your cottage, and see a little about these things."

"Very well!—let him: and the better, the sooner he please."

"Might I make bold, Sir, to ask him one or two further questions?" said Spelman.

"Surely,—oh, surely; you seem to understand him more readily than I do," replied Mr. Cothelston, who understood him as well as any man in England, but had in truth more confidence in his butler's powers of examining than his own.

"Did you, Waugh," said Spelman, "come into this country, to meet Mr.

Holtofte, or were you brought here, by him?"

"Holtofte is one hound," returned the fisherman.

"And is it your pleasure to give no other answer?" said Spelman, after waiting some moments.

"What will you have? Devil's in it! What you keep plaguing me? I tell you,—I am the man of Mr. Alderstoke only, and Mr. Mac-Eure likewise; they are good friend to me."

"Not Mr. Mac-Eure, I believe."

"I say, yes," replied Waugh.

"Why did he then talk of prosecuting you, a little while before he left England?"

"How you mean—persecute?" said the seaman.

"You know, as well as I do," replied Spelman; "he accused you,—for I heard him do it,—of some trick or other to get money out of him, that sounded to me as bad as a robbery."

"'Tis false!" cried the other.

"Remember where you are, man, and behave more decently," observed Mr. Cothelston.

"I do say, it is one falsehood; and whosoever shall choose to tell those words to me, I will say he is no different but a liar," replied the Dane. "Now here is one proof that Mr. Mac-Eure he did have much his confidence in me;—ay, to the last he did, more than in all of them put together; and one proof, that I will be the man that shall hear of him before any body else: for at my house is left his books,—good gentleman! and his music, and other little different things, what I am going to send him out, when I shall know in what land he have cast his lot for good and all. Now, such things, whether he should trust them to me, if he did think me the thief and rascal, you will please Mr. Cothelston, Sir, and say for yourself."

"Would it be giving you too much trouble, Sir," said the butler, "to walk down to the cottage, before breakfast, and look over these articles?"

"It must be done; the duty has become absolutely necessary;" returned the Squire. D'ye hear, Waugh! We are coming immediately to your house, in order to see what Mr. Mac-Eure has left behind; and if there is any thing of value, it must go to his creditors."

"Value! Ha! ha! That is one as very good joke as any I hear since I live in this kingdom. What you suppose Mr. Mac-Eure he did run away from England for? What he get together all that goods and plate—you fancy? No, Sir. You shall see every bit what I have; and then, if you do choose to lay your hands upon it, for the law, as I think, only is just your will and pleasure; why, you will do that what you like."

This sort of conversation was kept up during their walk to the cottage, sometimes all three taking a part, sometimes the fisherman stalking on, doggedly, a little ahead of the others, without speaking a word to either; for the propriety of giving

precedence to Mr. Cothelston, never appeared to have struck him.

"Is he deaf?" said the Squire to Spelman, after twice addressing an observation to Waugh.

"Very deaf, if he thinks proper, I believe, Sir."

"Then, perhaps, you can tell me, whether the ship Mac-Eure took his passage in was Danish?"

"I understand not, Sir. A Dantzicker, the Crowtonglass people seem to say."

"Poh, no, no," growled the seaman in front. "The gentleman is all in mistake,—and you, as well. The Saratoga she is—an armed brig, what does belong to the United States."

"I wish, Spelman," observed the Squire, "that my father and grandfather had taken up planting for their hobby-horse, as much as I did at one time: 't would have made a noble domain here. The woods might have been prolonged to the northward and eastward, covering, you see, the entire brow of those hills; and so forming an immense

amphitheatre of wood all round the park, except in the narrow valley that leads down towards the coast."

"Yes, Sir, it might have improved the property, Sir," returned the butler. "Stop there, Master Waugh; what are you in such a hurry for?" observing him mend his pace very considerably, as soon as they came in sight of the cottage.

"Why, you will not go to bring Mr. Cothelston to dirty, untidy place like that, till I been and put it to rights, something."

"You are hardly, my friend, so attentive to appearances in general, I suspect," said the Squire, with an air of much shrewdness. "We will go in together, if you please."

"Oh! and with all my soul, since that is your will," replied the seaman.

They accordingly entered a dwelling, which would very indifferently have answered the delightful ideas formed by young gentlemen and ladies, with minds turned to elegance, who sketch and quote, and write verses a little, and set them to

music a little—of a cottage in a wood; although few, probably, could have exceeded this, in the advantages of situation: for they found it ill ventilated, ruinous within, and so filthy, that the smell of last night's smoking was certainly the least disagreeable odour that assailed them. Waugh now produced some books, a few paintings that Mr. Cothelston full well remembered when his brother-in-law kept a large house and establishment, a violin, and a dressing-box, containing, among other things, a miniature picture of Mac-Eure, which was also the Squire's old acquaintance; it had been executed soon after his marriage, was a neat pretty performance, and about as much like Mr. Mac-Eure—as pictures done under those circumstances in general are. The cottager next called their attention to a hole in the wall, made, as he declared, by a bullet which had been fired at him while sitting alone at his supper; and upon examination, it did seem extremely probable, not to say certain, that a ball had gone in there, though the Squire professed

himself but little satisfied with the story, and his butler still less: nor were John Waugh's temper and manners at all improved by the discovery, that the more roundly he swore to this, or any other occurrence, the less his auditors were inclined to receive it as a fact. He had never been civil; he now grew rude and menacing; and when Mr. Cothelston, insisting that more of Mac-Eure's effects were probably concealed there, expressed his determination to witness a thorough search of the place from top to bottom; Waugh intimated, pretty clearly, by his movements, that he should oppose such proceeding, by the most effectual means in his power. Meanwhile he abused Spelman the butler (who, it must be owned, had conducted himself with no great respect towards him) with a flow of eloquence that sufficiently evinced in which branch of the English colloquial tongue he had made the chief proficiency. In truth, the Dane being an exceedingly powerful fellow, Mr. Cothelston and his minister were pretty much at

a stand just now; and the former afterwards confessed, that he had seldom felt more relieved in his life, than when, upon mention of sending for a constable, Waugh, conscious, seemingly, that, sooner or later, he must be the loser, proposed to surrender at discretion: still, however, protesting, with vehemence unabated, that whatever else might have belonged to Mr. Mac-Eure, or been in his custody, the latter had carried from England along with him.

The Squire and Spelman then proceeded to search the house from one end to the other; and without any extraordinary exertion either, as its dimensions were of the most moderate order. In the upper garret or loft, after being nearly poisoned by the stench of last year's apples, now rotting in heaps all over the room, and which they held it incumbent upon them scrupulously to remove, their diligence was rewarded by no discovery whatever; but on the ground-floor things wore a somewhat different aspect. They hunted, vainly indeed, in two avowed cupboards, in the coal or wood hole,

in the chimney, and wherever besides they could think of; they examined the stone floor without seeing any particularity about it, and were on the point of a retreat, when Spelman, who had noticed sundry glances cast by the Dane toward the outer door, whenever his master seemed totally occupied in this scrutiny; without giving a hint of his intentions, directed his own steps, forthwith, to a hovel within six yards of the cottage, which occasionally served for a stable; and there espied a strong-made, black-looking, large, wooden chest, high enough for a man to have taken his dinner upon. Of this piece of furniture, however, John Waugh announced that he had lost the key. They now, naturally enough, imagined themselves all but within reach of some notable acquisition, the only drawback to their possession of which, might be the intractability of their host, whose key they therefore resolved should be forthcoming, while he, apparently, had made up his mind, with at least equal decision, not to deliver it up. The arrange-

ment of this business to the satisfaction of all parties, might have been a work of some difficulty and address; but it so turned out, that Waugh had acted with less than his general circumspection, just at present, for the chest happened to be unlocked; a fact, which the Squire ascertained the instant he applied his hand to the lid;—and found it nearly half full—not of a single article that was ever likely to have been in Mr. Mac-Eure's hands. but of what would have been termed by the custom-house officers, run tobacco.

"There! see it all, and do your worst; you have your pleasure now, I do suppose," said the fisherman; "for why, I cannot say; but you are one enemy to me, Sir; and your laws they shall lay hold upon me for this, it is very likely."

"No! no! I came here with no intention of that sort," returned Mr. Cothelston. "The quantity of tobacco seems not very great, and as it is evident from this circumstance, that you were not imposing a parcel of falsehoods upon me, with regard to the

other affair, I do not design that you should be molested about the tobacco. Take care, though, or you may be a marked man in future: and government, I can promise you, has methods in agitation for looking after all this line of coast, that the Crowtonglass people little dream of."

Such effect had this courteous forbearance upon the Dane, that he stiffly drew back one leg, bobbed his head forwards, and muttered something about what was to be expected from a real gentleman: nor was his sense of gratitude exhausted even then; for he offered them each a glass of spirits before they went away: thus showing, almost to demonstration, that the things they had discovered, were not the only contraband goods in his possession.

CHAPTER VIII.

Every inmate of Peterstow House had been apprized, before bedtime on the preceding evening, that Waugh, the fisherman, whom they were used to consider as a sullen, unintelligible, solitary, and somewhat dangerous character, was to be had up and examined about the affair of shooting at young Mr. Ullesbey in the wood: and though such were the unsocial habits of the man, that he was known to none of the servants, who, consequently, could have nothing to say either against him or for him, if they had been confined to the truth; yet, from that very circumstance, no sooner did they hear his name mentioned, than he was universally given up; all agreeing, that if he were treated with sufficient harshness and severity, a clue must be found to the development of these

alarming transactions; and most affirming, that it could have been no other than he who fired the pistol. The cook, indeed, rather for the purpose of keeping up the subject, than the solution of any doubts upon her mind, did once inquire, what motive the man could have for so extraordinary an act of violence against a stranger in the country, and one whom it did not appear that he had ever attempted to rob; but she was immediately silenced, by the question in return—who could answer for the designs of such an awkward, disagreeable, ill-built fellow as John Waugh?

"So surly," the footman observed, "that if you wished him good-day in the road, you got only a grunt, like a swine, for your pains."

"So sly," the dairy-maid said, "that he never would venture to look any body fairly in the face; and so ugly, according to the washer-woman, that she had rather go half a mile about at any time, than look in his."

"He 's not an Englishman, however," said the groom; "that 's one thing."

"Nor he is n't a Frenchman," observed the cook. "I 've heard where 't is he comes from; but I don't remember it now."

"I do," said the washerwoman. "He 's a Portugee."

Something of the same expectations, it has been surmised, even prevailed in the parlour, where undoubtedly much disappointment was felt, and some expressed, when the Squire informed them, upon his appearance at breakfast, that all was involved in more obscurity than ever, nothing having transpired, that tended to criminate Waugh in the least.

"How very stupid!" said Jaqueline.

"Why so?" returned her father. "Do you want the poor man to get into mischief?"

"No. But I like events," said the young lady.

The Squire took but one cup of tea that morning; he frequently changed his position, and seemed perplexed in mind; at-

tending so little to the business in hand, that he made only two observations during the meal: the first expressed his sense of the impossibility of improving tea, however defective, after it had once been poured out; and the second conveyed, as far as it was listened to, an impression of ill usage that he was in the daily habit of sustaining, with reference to some hot roll, the middle bits alone being left for him, which lay heavy upon his stomach; a fact that (as he stated) was equally known and disregarded by the whole family. No sooner had he risen from his seat, than he summoned his grand vizir, Spelman, to another conference in the library; whither he was repairing himself, when Mary MacEure, who had watched his retreat, overtook him in the hall near a marble slab on which stood a black bust of the hero of the Nile.

"Will you permit me to ask a favour of you, Sir?" said she.

"Yes, my dear, yes; but make haste,

for I am worn to the very earth with business, to-day."

"A letter has been brought me from Westerwolde this morning, and I should excessively wish to see my mother, if it was convenient to let me have the carriage."

"Oh, bless my soul!" cried Cothelston, fretfully. "Why must you go to-day? I'm sure it cannot be necessary: do put it off, Mary; pray do."

"Certainly, Sir; I must, if there is any objection to my taking the carriage."

"There's no further objection," resumed the Squire, "than that I have parted with the coach-horses, and my people are so uncommonly busy, that I haven't a soul to send down to the Cothelston Arms for others. No—but is it really a matter of much importance, that you should go to-day?"

"I do not know that it is—very particularly so," said Miss Mac-Eure, slowly; for she was thinking how she could contrive to send for the post-horses and pay

for them herself, without offending her uncle by the measure.

"Your mother's temper is impatience itself, I am aware," said Mr. Cothelston. "The will of the moment must be complied with, and consequences are heroically braved and disdained upon every occasion. The motto of some people, all through life, with a slight variation from the original, is ——'What shall be, is unknown; what is, appears!' The mess of smoking savoury pottage is sufficiently alluring when one feels ravenous, and——"

"Pray, my dear uncle!" said Mary, almost in tears.

"Well, well, I beg pardon, my love," he replied, patting her cheek; "and to make amends, I'll tell you how you may contrive this expedition. Why should n't Rupert Ullesbey drive you over in the gig?"

"I believe, Sir, I had better postpone it altogether."

"Now, Mary, I like dignity and proper reserve in young women; nobody more; but I won't have you prudish: I am the per-

son to consider how far this scheme is suitable for you, and I see no objection to your going under the care of a quiet decent youth, the son of my much-valued friend, and one, who, as it gives me great satisfaction to think, is himself equally well behaved and well principled. Perhaps you are not of my opinion, though?"

"Indeed, but I am, as far as I have had opportunity to judge of Mr. Ullesbey," replied Mary, without the slightest hesitation.

"Then, my little dear, I, your uncle, who love you like a child of my own, do solemnly pronounce in favour of your going to Westerwolde under the escort of so unexceptionable a young man—if I hear he can drive, that is; on which head I mean to make all requisite inquiries."

And most certainly he did mean it; but Spelman had so much to say about retrenchments that were or were not feasible, tenants, repairs, and justice business, as put Westerwolde, his niece, and the gig, totally out of his head.

Nor was Mary so entirely satisfied with this arrangement, as to wait quietly till her uncle should lay his injunctions upon Ullesbey: on the contrary, she determined previously, if possible, to the latter becoming acquainted with the duty that was designed him, to discover how far he might be inclined to such a method of passing the better half of the day. With that view, she informed her eldest cousin of what had passed between Mr. Cothelston and herself, and fairly asked Clara, as Rupert's peculiar friend, whether she knew of any other plan that he had proposed to himself for that morning.

"My dear," replied Miss Cothelston, "you are not conscious, that this is a point of considerable delicacy: I doubtless am apprized of no absolute engagement that he has formed; and yet there are reasons why I had rather not ask him the question. But this you might do; you might allude to it by observing, as if casually, where you think of going; and by inquiring—

still in generals you know—as to the intentions of the rest of the party."

"I do not, somehow, quite like that circuitous mode of proceeding," returned Miss Mac-Eure; "and as I really am extremely anxious to find this out, and not at all ashamed of my motive, I shall put the question to him at once, Clara. "Mr. Ullesbey," she continued, walking up to Rupert, who was amusing himself with a bilbo-catch, and having caught the ball four times running upon the spiked end, had of course adverted but little to what went on at the other part of the room;—"you will excuse my impertinence, I hope; but I have a particular reason for asking whether you are likely to be engaged out of doors this morning, in any manner that will occupy a great part of the day?"

Rupert coloured, for he had scarce exchanged twenty words with Mary Mac-Eure since they had been in the house together

"Certainly not, Miss Mac-Eure; no—not that I recollect at least." Then cast-

ing his eyes upwards, he encountered those of Clara Cothelston, who happened, with an air of much carelessness, to be sauntering towards them. "Oh! I beg ten thousand pardons," cried he, on sudden recollection. "It could n't be done last Thursday, and as this is the first fair open morning, I must now claim the accomplishment of Miss Cothelston's promise, to ride with me as far as the old barn and mill, belonging to Lyfton priory, which she was kind enough to say she would suffer no one to show me but herself."

"Have you not seen Lyfton yet?" said Mary. "T.is a very striking remnant of antiquity, I assure you, and I heartily wish you a pleasant excursion." So saying, she tripped away perfectly satisfied, and was reconsidering how she should take the post-horses, without displeasing the Squire, when her cousin Clara slightly pinched her by the elbow.

"You see, Mary," said she, "there would have been an awkwardness in my questioning him upon the subject."

"Yes, my dear, I think there might," replied Miss Mac-Eure; "but there would have been none, that I can discover, in your telling me, plainly and directly, that you had engaged him to ride to Lyfton barn with you."

"Now, you are angry, Mary; you're vexed at having put yourself forward to take rather an uncommon step, for no use."

"Not in the slightest degree,—I give you my word," said Mary, holding out her hand; which the other just touched, and was walking off, by no means convinced that her cousin had not been offended, because she herself felt hurt and uncomfortable at her former answer.

Miss Mac-Eure, however, had something to request of her yet, which she explained on the stairs, as Clara went up to put on her riding things; and in that petition the latter promised to accommodate her, as far as lay in her power. Clara returned to the parlour in fine spirits; scolded Ullesbey in jest for not having the horses ready; settled, that Joseph should follow,

on the gray, to open gates; broke out into raptures (no very frequent occurrence) at some work in coloured lamb's wool that Jaqueline was finishing, pronounced it to be the exact medium between too gaudy and too sombre; and then turned away to find out what the county history said, about the ruins they were going to see.

"It is beyond me to conceive," said Rupert, looking over her, "what could have been the object of Miss Mac-Eure's question to me, a little while ago. Do you think she wanted one to be useful to her, in any way?"

"I know she did; and hope you'll agree to execute her commission: it won't give us a great deal of trouble."

"If it gave ever so much, I should be most happy to be so employed."

"I was certain you would. I always speak my mind pretty freely, and must say that ill-nature is not your foible, Mr. Ullesbey: this will be an accommodation to Mary, I assure you, who has an excellent heart."

"Yes," said he; "and something remarkably taking, in her manner."

"Do you think so?" said Clara.

"Yes, I do; because, though evidently shy, and reserved in consequence, her manner is not grave; so far from it, she always gives me the impression of playfulness even: she has, altogether, one of the sweetest countenances I ever saw, without one's being able to distinguish which exact feature it is to be attributed to."

"She has, certainly, many amiable qualities," returned Miss Cothelston; "but you don't call her nose a good feature! why, it's turned up at the end!"

"At the end, is it? Well, and what does she want us to do?" said Ullesbey.

"The case is this, you see: poor dear girl, she has set her heart upon going over to her mother at Westerwolde, this morning; and my father (a great deal sooner than there was any necessity for,—as mamma says) has put down the carriage horses; therefore Mary, you comprehend, wants us to go round by the Cothelston Arms, and

order post-horses for her, as soon as they can be got ready. It will take us a quarter of a mile at least out of our way,—but what is that, if we can be of any service to her? I am vexed, I declare, that it's out of our power to do any thing more."

"So am I," said Rupert, "for she cannot possibly set off yet for these two hours, at the earliest. Let me see,—How many horses do they keep at the Cothelston Arms?"

"How should I know, Mr. Ullesbey, what number of horses they have at the public house?"

"I am almost sure," said he, "that your butler told me they kept but one pair; and if so,—there's a chance of your cousin not getting supplied at all. Let me see,—I have it! I have it!" snapping his fingers, and dancing about the room; "give me credit, Miss Cothelston; compliment me; give me a prize! I can extricate her from every difficulty; deuce take me, if I can't!" Clara looked somewhat apprehensive, and exceedingly serious. "That your father

has not parted with the gig horse," continued Ullesbey, "I had good experience, yesterday; so, what in the world could be easier——"

"Mr. Ullesbey," said Jaqueline, interrupting him, "your gallant palfreys are now at the door."

"But I have altered my mind," cried Clara, sharply and hastily, as if to cut off some other proposal; "and whatever I do, I shall not ride to-day, most assuredly."

"Oh, clearly not," said Rupert, still delighted with his own plan; "surely not. I am quite of your opinion. The present day may be every thing to Miss Mac-Eure, and we can go at any time to see those horrid old barns and places, may n't we, Miss Cothelston?"

She had turned, however, to the window, out of which she looked for a long while with such steadiness, that it seemed impossible to divert her attention: indeed, if the truth must be told, she was so near crying, which, notwithstanding her accustomed indulgence of all her humours, she

saw would dreadfully disgrace her,—that nothing but her own resolute silence, added to her sister's ignorance of the opportunity afforded for teasing her, could possibly have concealed the real nature of her feelings. As to Ullesbey, he supposed her (and was happy to do so) actuated by the same motives as himself; and scampering immediately, in search of Mary Mac-Eure, he pressed his scheme upon her, with the most unaffected good-will and cordiality, protesting that her cousin was as well disposed to it as he could be; insomuch, that Mary soon accepted the accommodation with gratitude, and the frankest acknowledgment of its very essential convenience; being better pleased with no circumstance whatever, belonging to the plan, than that Clara should, at last, have shown herself inclined in earnest to deal so fairly and friendly by her.

CHAPTER IX.

RUPERT felt so extremely pleased with himself, for having been thus useful and alert in the service of another, and for his acuteness in hitting off this mode of proceeding in particular, that he had driven Mary more than half a mile, before he recollected that, after all, this duty, like most other duties, must be performed at the expense of some gratification to the person undertaking it. And he bethought him, that the whole forenoon, and several hours more, must now be passed in the society of that individual of the family, whom he knew least, however he might estimate the advantages which she eminently possessed, in a very pleasing person and engaging address.

Besides, he had heard her cousins describe her as cold and cautious, so often,

that he began to think there must be something in the charge; and to crown the business, Mary had never, till upon this occasion, appeared disposed towards the slightest intimacy with him.

In addition to all this, he was to forego an enchanting ride, in the company of just the most fascinating girl he had ever known, with ideas congenial to his upon every occurrence in life; and such superior taste and elegance! Moreover, he liked a woman to be decidedly tall (just now, at least, that opinion prevailed); and Clara was so: taller, if any thing, he thought, than Miss Puddicombe, daughter of the Principal of—we forget what—Hall; but reckoned the model for a figure in the university; and at the same time, not such an absolute maypole as Dr. Flynn's niece, Emma Pilsher—about whom the young men made a monstrous rout, too.

Rupert, however, was not a person to suffer his temper to be affected by these little disappointments: his main object had been, for some weeks, the recommending

himself to Clara Cothelston, undoubtedly; but he likewise wished to be acceptable to every body else, and was therefore much pleased, when (contrary to his expectation) Mary Mac-Eure first broke the ice, and began to converse with him.

"I do not know, Mr. Ullesbey, whether you are of my uncle's opinion; but he thinks, that in all public buildings, at present, situation and effect are apt to be laid too much stress upon."

"Is that the way Mr. Cothelston considers the thing?" said Ullesbey, desirous that she should talk on, but never having adverted to the subject himself, for a moment.

"Always: 'tis a favourite position of his. But I mentioned it, because, if you look at Haddesley church, there; it seems that our forefathers were much in the same error. The church is clearly ancient; and placed, you see, on a small hill, in the centre of that wood, as if purposely to remove it from the body of the village."

"What a strange fancy!" said Ulles-

bey: "it's a very old building, though; and there is something striking in the site and appearance of it—that I can perceive plainly enough, and derive pleasure from too; but as to Dugdale and Camden, I cannot talk learnedly about them, and the pointed window of this century, and the tracery of the other, and whether the Norman arch differs from the Saxon, or not—I wish I could, with all my heart. Are you romantic, Miss Mac-Eure?"

Mary laughed.

"I have occasionally suspected," said she, "if I really comprehend the word, that there is a little latent feeling of that sort in my disposition."

"Miss Cothelston is, I believe," observed Rupert; "she talks well upon those topics, at least."

"Depend upon it, Mr. Ullesbey, Clara not only talks well, but is thoroughly well informed, on a great many branches of knowledge: she takes uncommon pains, and has an admirable memory."

"She is not, perhaps, what one calls handsome in face," said Ullesbey.

"I think she is," returned Mary. "She has as fine a complexion as you will meet with any where, and beautiful teeth."

"Ah, teeth! you 're right, Miss MacEure. You talk with great accuracy and great candour."

"Candour!" said Mary, in a tone of surprise.

Rupert felt that his expression was rather an odd one, and liked her the better for her astonishment at it; but though he knew perfectly well what he meant, he did not choose to explain.

"Whereabout is the parsonage?" said he, reverting to the church in the wood, which they had now lost sight of.

"Haddesley parsonage do you mean? Why, you have been there, to be sure, over and over again!" But that he denied.—"Is it possible?" continued Mary; "or have Dr. and Mrs. Carruthers been away the whole time since you came into the county?"

"Every instant of it," said he; "though I have heard them discussed, as you might suppose. The Doctor, I take it, is an extremely old man?"

"Not so old, as infirm," replied Mary. "He is feeble and paralytic, and has ceased to do duty at either church—(the Peterstow living also belongs to him, you know)—for years."

"Pray, Miss Mac-Eure, has not the Doctor a son, whom his friends call Bentley Carruthers?"

"Yes, indeed," she replied; "Mr. Samuel Bentley Carruthers."

"I wish you would favour me with a description of him."

"I believe, Mr. Ullesbey, I must undeceive you in one respect," said Mary. "Many people, many women in particular, have a decided turn for drawing characters; they are scarcely in company with a person twice, before they see, or fancy they see, through all his or her virtues, defects, weaknesses, and peculiarities, which they are apt to enlarge upon with great

liveliness and cleverness, very frequently; sometimes in good humour, and sometimes, I am afraid, with an inclination to severity. Now,—it has occurred to me, I must say, that, if they are intimate with those they ridicule, they ought not to dwell upon their failings; and if otherwise,—is it not almost equally wrong, to say what we do not know to be true, as to say what we know not to be true? However, whether the practice be allowable, or the contrary, I have no talent for it, and must beg leave to decline it."

Here, though Ullesbey immediately remembered all that the Miss Cothelstons had said about the closeness of their cousin's disposition, he did not altogether feel so clear, that, as applicable to her present discourse, the habit was at all an illiberal one.

"So, you won't tell me any thing about Bentley Carruthers, Miss Mac-Eure?" said he, laughing; "well, then, I'll tell you something. He is remarkably active and skilful in all bodily exercises; he is indisposed to

go into the church, and his fate depends upon your youngest cousin."

"His fate, indeed!" answered Mary: then, after a moment's thought, "He admires Jaqueline; no doubt, he does; but not more, I should think, than many other men who are in the course of coming to Peterstow; and I must add, though I would not undertake any minute portrait of Mr. Carruthers, that, in your enumeration of his advantages, you have omitted one very considerable point,—he is singularly well-looking."

They now left the road, and by Mary's direction turned into the lane that led to Westerwolde, Rupert expressing his astonishment that they should have arrived already, and his doubts whether the distance could be actually twelve miles, as had been represented to him: meanwhile, he thought his companion grew grave, as they approached; and knowing how particularly Mrs. Mac-Eure was circumstanced, and conceiving, naturally, that she would wish to have every instant of her daughter's

spare time to herself; he informed Mary of his intention to proceed straightway to the next inn, and see the horse properly taken care of, as soon as he had set her down,—only desiring to be instructed when he should call for her again.

All this attention was extremely well received by Mary, and, indeed, an effective relief to her; for she dreaded the reception which her mother might think fit to give any body, known or unknown to her, from Peterstow house.

They made as grand a sweep as Ullesbey could manage, round the old court-yard overgrown with high grass, and littered with stones and other rubbish, and had hardly drawn up before the door, when the servant-maid appeared, whom we have mentioned on a former occasion, and who was affectionately greeted by Miss Mac-Eure.

"God bless thee, Miss Mary," said she; "things are always put to rights for a little when you come over, and they last, sometimes, but not very often, till you do come over again. You're the friend of them

that's poor; you're the friend of them that's heart-broken; every one here loves the very sight of thee, and the sound of thy voice is the best music that ever gets to my ears."

This she repeated as she helped Mary out of the carriage, who then turned to Rupert, and with thanks for his kindness, warmly though shortly expressed, was settling the hour when she would go back to Peterstow: but Mrs. Mac-Eure, hearing her daughter's accents, rushed to the door, and had already clasped her in her arms, with every symptom of passionate fondness, when she beheld Ullesbey; and putting, or rather pushing Mary aside, she drew up stately, and fixed on him an inquisitive look, by no means unmixed with displeasure. He made her a profound bow, which the lady scarce noticed; till, upon her daughter informing her who he was, and why he came there,—"I had heard," said she, "of Mr. Ullesbey being in the county, and ought to feel obliged to him, I suppose, for performing an irksome office, which no

one else in the house where he is living, would have chosen to undertake."

Rupert was positively so struck with awe, or some feeling very like awe, at her bitter and scornful mode of speaking, that he merely muttered something of the pleasure it gave him to attend on Miss Mac-Eure; again fixed the time at which he should return in the afternoon, and inquiring of the maid the way to the village inn,—away he bowled, vastly well satisfied to have escaped from the mother, and no less pleased at the opportunity thus afforded him of gratifying a curiosity to see that lady, which had become exceedingly powerful. He thought her over, all the way up to the Swan, as distinctly as he could, endeavouring to impress upon his memory every trait and every feature. A prodigiously fine woman,—there could be no doubt of that; taller than her daughter; very like her in many respects, but with features much more strongly marked, and what many, he was conscious, would reckon handsomer; though with such he could

not concur. If really thirty-seven, as he had heard, she wore wondrously well; but he questioned the fact; having always understood that she was little more than eighteen years older than Mary, whom he considered as barely seventeen. Before he had done with ages, he thought he might as well settle those of the Miss Cothelstons, which were accordingly arranged to his satisfaction; the eldest being, as he laid it down, precisely of his own standing, and the other not above a year younger; but when he came to Lady Annabella, she puzzled him; he could no more comprehend her exact time of life, than he could her ideas upon any one single subject under the sun. "After all,—what does it signify?" said he to himself. "A tolerable bore, though, this pull, just at the end of a stage."

He was then toiling up a steep ascent in the village, on the summit of which appeared the sign of the Swan, forming an arch over the road, and swinging to and fro, so as to afford hopes, that, sultry and

oppressive as it was below, there might be something of a breeze when he got to the top of the hill: and in this situation we must leave him for the present, in order to see what Mrs. Mac-Eure had to communicate to her daughter at Westerwolde.

"I was afraid they would have detained you, Mary," said the mother, after inquiring a little about Rupert Ullesbey, of whom the younger made a most favourable report; "and so, I have no doubt, they would, had they known my excessive eagerness to see you, and uneasiness till you could come over. My dearest child, look here; because I was not tormented enough, by every imaginable distress and perplexity before,—some base, infamous assassin has thought proper to attack me with that scrawl."

This said, she placed in her daughter's hands an anonymous letter, written upon half a sheet of long paper, sealed with a wafer, more than two thirds of which were visible, blotted, and badly spelt. The exact terms of this precious performance we are

not disposed to transcribe; but in its effect—it apprized the lady that Mr. Alderstoke was her avowed lover; that his friends accustomed themselves to talk of her, in mixed and very little select companies,—with admiration, indeed, fully sufficient,—but without respect, delicacy, or, very often, common decency. It went on to warn her, that (if she did not include a value for reputation, among those prejudices which she was superior to) she must abstain from receiving his visits, as she had done; and concluded with expressions of strong suspicion that nothing new would be imparted to her by this letter. Mary was uncommonly troubled by it; she looked at her mother, then read parts of the letter over again, and seemed unable to bring her mind to any conclusion.

"Tell me, child, at once," said Mrs. Mac-Eure, "whether you believe that Mr. Alderstoke himself has made free with my name, in the abominable manner here described?"

"I do not," returned Mary.

"Then I am satisfied: for perfectly well do I know, Mary, that nothing would have hindered you from telling the truth, if you had thought otherwise."

"I conclude, however," observed the other, "that you will extract what good you can from this strange production: the counsel it gives, my dear mother, notwithstanding its general or probable intention, may be well worth attending to."

The countenance of Mrs. Mac-Eure altered, and she stared hard at her daughter. "My dear, your advice was not demanded upon that subject,—that I am aware of."

"I beg your pardon," said Mary, with tears in her eyes; "but mine is really a task of great pain and difficulty here: if I am not to give my honest judgment upon what you inform me of, why, may I ask, was I sent for at all?"

"Don't be perverse, Mary; you must know the difference between confining yourself to the matter in which I want your assistance, and passing a sort of censure, by implication, upon my conduct. You told

me, just now, in a clear and unreserved manner, that you did not suppose Mr. Alderstoke to have been guilty of the grossness imputed to him, or to some of his friends."

"My dearest mother, I said so, most certainly; and am persuaded, that he has a vast deal too much sense and discretion, to have behaved as things are represented in that paper."

"Surely," continued her mother; "and too much consideration for me; and too much——" hesitating a moment, and then going on, determined, seemingly, not to be thwarted in using the word that had first suggested itself, "too much regard for me."

"I hope he has," returned Miss MacEure.

"I am sure he has," continued the former, with warmth. "Friendship is a quality much talked of; but this age, I fancy, can show few such instances of friendship, as Mr. Alderstoke has manifested by me."

"I fear you are deceiving yourself," observed Mary; "you imagine that he has

permitted you to live in this house, to his own constant loss."

"I do affirm it," said the other.

"You are mistaken, I assure you."

"How!" cried Mrs. Mac-Eure, her countenance glowing like fire, and her eyes sparkling. "Mind what you say, Mary; take care what you are about."

"My uncle Cothelston has paid him a rent for it," returned the younger, firmly, "ever since you resided here."

"'T is a falsehood of my brother's," cried her mother, getting up and stamping upon the floor. "'T is a lie, invented to draw me into his power, and persuade the world that I am under obligations to him, which I had rather die by inches than be."

Mary suffered her passion to exhaust itself, in some measure, before she answered.

"I do not presume, mother, to offer any opinion upon the indignation which you are so apt to express against my uncle; but be it well or ill founded, I will only entreat you to reflect for an instant, and then say, whether he is the sort of man

(however he may have conducted himself towards you) to assert that he had paid Mr. Alderstoke a rent for the house, if he had not."

"I would willingly say any thing you desired me, Mary," replied Mrs. MacEure, in a tone of forced and mock mildness; "but I see plainly that my own child has joined my enemies. The only faint glimmering of comfort that I looked forward to, either in this world or any other, has gone from me entirely; and I have really nothing more to say at all."

She leant down upon the table, wept almost continually, and if it was her object to distress her daughter, succeeded to her heart's content; but would engage in very little further discourse, and none with any openness or affection, during the remainder of the time that Mary stayed.

CHAPTER X.

We now revert to Ullesbey, whom we left in the act of ascending the "Hill Difficulty" that led to the Swan inn. Having surmounted those labours, summoned the ostler, and given him all requisite instructions, he stopped for a minute to listen more attentively to certain shouts of mirth and jollity which had partly reached his ear even before he gained the top of the hill; and now he pretty distinctly heard the finishing verse of a composition, which, by the universal knocking and clattering of knives and spoons, roarings, and indeed, shrieks of applause that followed, he concluded must have been an uncommonly good song.

These sounds clearly proceeded from a bow-windowed room, the largest in the

house by far, in front of which he had to pass, before he could make his way into the inn: the window was wide open, so that it would have been next thing to impossible for him to avoid looking in upon the company if he had wished it,—nor do we at all know that he would have wished it, had the measure been practicable. As things stood, he discerned a party of a dozen or more, flushed, noisy fellows, swilling and laughing, with the sun shining in strong upon them on one of the hottest afternoons that had been felt through the whole year. One, and only one, of this assemblage was recognised by Ullesbey; and he felt tolerably sure, from the situation in which he sat, that the other could not have perceived him. This was Mr. Holtofte, whose great broad face glowed like the hunter's moon, and who seemed to be making himself conspicuous apace; rocking about in his chair, and brandishing his arms, as if convivial powers came by dint of bodily exertion. Upon inquiry of the waiter, when he had procured some refreshment for him-

self, Rupert was informed, that this meeting consisted of one of the first clubs, if not the very first, that had ever been instituted in the county: the old original "Staunch and True." They kept to the same dishes, according to the waiter, that had been favourites at the formation of the club, and as nearly as could be to the same hour of dining; the first dish being laid upon the table at two precisely, under a penalty to the landlord—of which, had our friend continued attentive, he might have learned the amount; but he had already acquired more information than he wanted, and was at this time occupied by a mutton-chop. Being destined, however, little as he thought of it, to make his appearance, ere long, in the midst of these choice spirits, and to intrude upon the profoundest mysteries of the Staunch and True, it may be necessary to explain how things took so inauspicious a turn in that assembly, as to render his invasion not only excusable, but laudable.

This club, as had been truly stated, was

of great antiquity: so great, that it had sunk by degrees out of the hands of the principal landholders in the county, and fallen into those of such gentlemen as attended the meeting we are treating of. There were present indeed two Squires of the old stamp (and very likely no more could have been procured within eighty miles of the place, north, south, east, and west), who still resided upon their own property, with a nominal income of five hundred a year, producing perhaps about three to spend. Their family names had once been important, though now probably those who bore them were of the least real conquence of all the members that disported themselves at the Swan, upon this occasion.

The rest consisted of farmers, thriving tradesmen, attorneys, a medical man here and there, and three or four, it was said, of the clergy; though certainly none of the latter were in the room on the present festival. At this club, Holtofte was usually in his element: his means of livelihood, indeed, were not so well defined as those of many

around him; but he had spent a good deal of money in his time, seen much of the world, in one way or another, and managed to make the utmost of these advantages in his conversation. Then he enjoyed in general the sort of clamorous boisterous spirits, which, after a certain portion of liquor had been swallowed — for instance, after all the established toasts had been given, and when sentiments began to be called for — were the cause of mirth in other men. We said that Mr. Holtofte was the noisiest of the company, *usually*, and beg to repeat that last word, because, as several had already observed, he was by no means in first-rate force this after noon.

Had noise indeed been every thing (and a considerable part of the business it undoubtedly was), we do not know but he might have maintained his fame: he flagged however in keeping matters properly up; that was soon seen: his efforts became languid, and as his satirical remarks were not merely confined to the absent—some

took unfavourable impressions as to the state of his temper.

The effects of a slovenly first fiddle were now manifest all through the concert; so that, after the conclusion of the song which Ullesbey had been partially regaled with (and which, by the way, was executed by an ironmonger, of whom his friends said, 'What a singer he'd have made, if he had ever learnt music), the uproar dwindled down to a mere buz: no good stories followed, and, to the disgrace of this ancient and very famous society, several ceased to talk at all, while others began to prose upon subjects connected with their respective trades and professions. Mr. Holtofte, the individual who could soonest have remedied this mischief, let it, nevertheless, proceed to such a pass, that one Medgeley, a lawyer, was absolutely requested, by no fewer than three of the party, to give them the particulars of a remarkable criminal case, tried at Atterford in the spring, which he, or his partner, had been obliged to attend.

Then indeed Holtofte, conscious that every thing was running to ruin, seemed to feel somewhat ashamed of himself: he protested against dull matter of fact detail, asserted that, to his knowledge, this story was a long one, and asked Mr. Medgeley for a lady. The attorney gave the lady readily enough; but did not quite understand why his narrative was to be cut down in that cavalier manner; so he swore it was not a long one; and there he took his ground, waiting to be asked to tell it again, a request which speedily followed upon that information. As more of the company joined in the invitation this time than had done so at first, Holtofte, being thus, as it were, outvoted, scarce made any endeavour to conceal his spleen. He likewise, in sarcastic strain, now begged to hear it for the eighteenth time, and hoped it might prove intelligible to the professional gentlemen present, at least. This sneer by no means escaped the solicitor; but having carried his point, he could very well command his temper, so he passed it over with-

out notice; and as (whatever might be the case in Squire Western's day) it would have been equally out of character at the period we describe, for the lowest country attorney to have talked in professional jargon, as to have introduced a friend at this dinner in a shirt of mail and gauntlets, he commenced his narration like an ordinary man of this world, not dwelling minutely upon what took place at the trial, but mentioning the general result of the business.

"That wretch Blackader," said he, "who is likely hereafter, I think, to eclipse the renown of the most distinguished murderers in the annals of Newgate, was desirous of raising a larger sum upon an annuity, than those who had the money to dispose of were willing to give for that annuity secured on his life merely — for I should have told you, gentlemen, that he was not far from seventy when he made the application. Well, there was a monstrous deal of haggling, and he did n't choose to reduce the main sum, of which, being a profligate old dog, he stood very

much in need; but found means, you see, to prevail upon his son, a strong man in the vigour of youth, to let the family estate remain charged with the annuity for the life of the latter solely: the old one, of course, to pay it while he continued in this world. You comprehend, gentlemen?"

"Oh! yes.—Clear enough.—Go on then," cried several, together.

"I have but little more to tell," continued Medgeley. "This old incarnate fiend murdered, as you all know, his own son in order to cheat the annuitant; and it was not discovered till upward of thirteen years afterwards, when he tottered on the extreme verge of the grave."

"A shocking disagreeable story," observed Holtofte, "totally unfit for a meeting like this, and what every body in the room, I'd lay a wager, has heard before."

"I never did, I'll take my oath," said Squire Featherston; "and shall be obliged to my very good friend Mr. Medgeley, if he will go on and inform us how the whole thing came out."

"That I happen," said one Faunes, an apothecary, "to be as capable of doing as any lawyer in the land; for Blackader poisoned his son—to be sure he did—and a young man that now lives with my brother-in-law, was the very person he applied to——"

"Oh, devil take all this," cried Holtofte. "I say, Saunderson, we shall call upon you next——"

"William Skirrett is his name," continued the apothecary, "at that time a boy of twelve or thirteen at most; and he, as I said, was the person applied to for some corr——"

"Mr. Faunes, Mr. Faunes, if you interrupt the order of the meeting——"

"Some corrosive sublimate," proceeded the undaunted apothecary.

"We must fine you a bumper, Sir," observed Mr. Holtofte.

"What is all this clamour about?" the other now asked, with some peevishness.

"Plague 's in it! We have listened to

noise and nonsense from that quarter long enough; and, judging by myself, the company found it mighty dull: so I do now beg we may have a little rational conversation."

"Any gentleman," said Holtofte, reddening or rather blackening in face, "who chooses to harangue, in a mixed company, upon his own stupid concerns, may do so doubtless; but in that case, my way is to consider him a fool, and pay him no further attention."

"And my way," returned Faunes, wishing to appear still perfectly calm, but hardly giving the other time to finish, "is to disregard, in toto, what any gentleman may think of me, more especially if the opinions of that gentleman be below contempt; but if any man, you observe, takes the freedom to *tell* me I am a fool, my way in that case is to send a bottle at his head."

"Oh, harmony! Harmony in the club!" cried the ironmonger.

"Shameful! No words. No quarrelling," cried others.

"The fellow 's an ass, and there 's an end of it," said Holtofte.

But notwithstanding that assertion, there was not an end of it: for, though we may remark that Mr. Holtofte varied his opprobrious term, his opponent, unfortunately, had drawn no precise line between the two modes of expression, and determining, as it should seem, to visit this last offence with the same penalty denounced against the former, he stretched out his arm for the bottle; but the attorney, with much good sense, and, we will add, disinterestedness, had conveyed it out of his reach. Disappointed in this weapon, which for many reasons he would have preferred, he now cast a rapid glance over the dessert: and having no great time to make a selection, availed himself of a dish of baked pears, with the syrup of which Mr. Holtofte streamed in an instant from the head to the knees. The latter, however, not being of a temper to disregard

this piece of courtesy, or indeed making any pretensions to such meekness and forbearance, resolved upon a retort in kind; though, confused and enraged as he was, it is difficult to suppose he would have hit upon so appropriate a one, had not an immense jug of cool tankard stood at his elbow, incomparably made with borage and every ingredient that could be most refreshing in that excessively hot afternoon. This he discharged, pitcher and all (so at least goes the tradition of those times), at the head of the man of horehound; and with such power of arm as well as good will, that, had not the latter dodged beneath the table, it is probable that the story of Blackader's murder would never again have been observed upon by him. As it was, the apothecary scarce got wet; while all the rest of the party that sat on the same side of the table, were most profusely and piteously besluiced; and such a din and tumult now arose, as we feel ourselves unequal to describe, and are wofully put to it for an illustration of. King Agra-

mante's camp has been used before, so have the Lapithæ and Centaurs; and we hardly think that the French National Convention, or any other legislative assembly, when those hitherto in a minority, appear likely to carry a point, will give an adequate idea of the boisterous rudeness that prevailed. It would not have been a little matter, on a "Staunch and True" evening, that could alarm the landlord; but he now judged it necessary to bestir himself in earnest. Had only two or four been fighting, his wife and the waiter might have been thought a force sufficient to interfere with; but now that the whole room was in action, he supplicated Ullesbey for his assistance to prevent consequences which, he said, were likely to end fatally, and to bring down ruin, at any rate, upon himself and all his family. This reinforcement was well chosen and of much value: for, although the members of this venerable old club would scarcely have desisted from any violence, merely upon the entrance of the people of the house and their servants; when a total stranger,

and, to say the truth, a very gentleman-like-looking stranger, appeared among them, the major part were not so drunk but that they made instant efforts to restore quiet and decency. Mr. Holtofte, at sight of Rupert, seemed to feel some vexation and embarrassment; but rallied in pretty good time, shook hands with him, asked how he came there, laughed rather loudly than heartily at his own figure, soiled and soaking, and taking him aside, while the landlord and his wife were putting the table to rights, observed, that, repulsive as it might be to his habits, there existed a necessity for keeping up intimacy and some connexion with these persons, several of whom were, in their line, any thing but inconsiderable.

"And the gentleman with whom I am concerned," added he, "Mr. Alderstoke, I mean, is so sensitive, delicate, and fastidious, that 't is always left to me to attend these large meetings; though in what his superiority, either of mind or fortune, may consist, is a great deal more than I

can explain. But the duty is not over-delightful, Mr. Ullesbey, I can promise you."

"The deuce it is n't!" returned Rupert; "I thought, till within ten minutes of all this riot and quarrelling, that you seemed going on as jovially as possible?"

"A sad set of blackguards!" said Holtofte, in an under tone, as he left Ullesbey, with the intention of endeavouring, by every possible contrivance, to recover his own popularity among them.

Rupert, entertaining precisely the same sentiments of Mr. Holtofte, which the latter had just expresssed concerning the company whom he meant to conciliate, now called for the gig; and repairing to Westerwolde again, took up his patient, sensible, sweet-tempered, and very pretty charge, with whom he proceeded for Peterstow, as fast as they could go; agreeing how lucky it was, though the nominal hour at that house stood for six, that it happened to be almost impossible, by any management, to come in late for dinner.

Rupert would fain have entertained Miss Mac-Eure during their drive back,

with as full an account as he could give of the transactions at the Swan: but perceiving, though she was never gloomy or even inattentive, that something had occurred to disturb her, he soon ceased from pressing her to talk; and Mary, with a heavy heart, reflected upon the extremely unsatisfactory result of this interview with her mother. Before to-day, although she well knew of the frequent intercourse maintained between Mrs. Mac-Eure and Alderstoke, she had flattered herself that the former disliked, and only endured it on a principle of gratitude. But now, she had fearful reason to alter that opinion; and aware of her mother's haughty, headstrong temper, and general scorn of the sentiments of others, particularly those of her own relations, when they, in any respect, opposed what she had set her will upon; such a train of painful images occurred to Mary, that by determined efforts she drove them from her mind: to which, however, they returned within half an hour, and so continued, at intervals, all through the evening.

CHAPTER XI.

The experience of the next few days convinced our young friend that Clara Cothelston was not altogether the divinity which his imagination had made her; and the only wonder is, that he did not find it out long before. He now thought she showed a pretty decent share of the waywardness and caprice, too often attached (as he settled it) to the possession of superior talent, and almost feared at times that she was positively pettish and sulky; in which state of mind there is but a scanty portion of dignity at all. Still there was one loophole left, by which she might creep out of his rather declining opinion, and even raise her merit to a higher pitch than ever; and by that narrow outlet, Rupert took good care she should escape. Against him, indeed, her spleen had been chiefly directed;

but, as it did not manifest itself in neglect and disregard, but rather in huffishness, oblique reproaches, petulant contradiction, and other methods that might have proved what requisites she had for a charming wife; as it was, likewise, occasionally mixed with gentler reproofs, that approached to downright tenderness, and a never-failing attention, which made him the principal person in the company; Ullesbey admitted the possibility of his being a greater favourite in that quarter than he had even suspected; and concluding, that, by the carelessness of his manners, he had, somehow or other, given offence, though he could not divine how,—came to a determination, as her feelings were so exquisite, to be more cautious for the future.

There were two mature maiden ladies, called Sudwell, of no high original extraction, who lived just above the sea, and within eight miles of Peterstow. They had, however, some very respectable, nay—rather smart connexions in London, from whom, when, on motives of economy, they

retired to their present residence, these ladies were favoured with letters, not merely of introduction, but strong recommendation to the Cothelston family. The Squire therefore, in his somewhat ostentatious way, had shown them much effective civility, and Lady Annabella, also, took it into her head to prefer them to most of her neighbours; often observing, what worthy, excellent creatures, the Miss Sudwells were; and what a deal they had done for that bleak place upon Kirkby Moor, which was horror itself when they first came to live there. But it so happened, that notwithstanding all this esteem and regard, what with their recent losses, and some consequent changes in the establishment at Peterstow, the dear Sudwells had never once been visited, or, we believe, mentioned, for a considerable number of weeks,—certainly not, since Rupert Ullesbey arrived in the county. Now, although when the coach-horses were disposed of, it was said confidently, that the difference to the family, in point of convenience, would be just nothing at all, as

they could hire horses whenever they chose; a system that was demonstrated to be preferable in every respect, to the maintaining four great black sleek monsters of their own, that devoured as much as so many elephants; yet, by some accident, it fell out, that these post-horses were seldom wanted: they were very seldom sent for, at least,—indeed, never once, as far as we have been informed, till, on a sudden spirited freak, it was resolved to show the Miss Sudwells that the Cothelstons had by no means given them up, or ceased to exert that activity in visiting, bustling, and taking a lead in things, which had erst distinguished the house of Peterstow.

For this purpose, the sociable, a species of conveyance more fashionable in those times than at the present day, (if, indeed, it is ever visible now), drew up to the door. towards noon, accompanied by a saddle-horse for Rupert, and another for either of the young ladies who might choose to ride; Mr. Cothelston standing to see them off, and contenting himself with the message of

his kindest compliments to the Sudwells, and the information (by way of apology, we suppose), that he was but a bad morning visitor.

"Do you intend to go to Kirkby, Mary?" said her eldest cousin.

"Yes, my dear; why should I not?" replied Miss Mac-Eure.

"Because—I don't know—because, you 've been so little inclined for any gaiety, of late——"

"No remarkable gaiety in a visit of this sort, surely."

"Mary thinks she 's a favourite there, I am as certain as possible," said Jaqueline.

"Miss Theresa Sudwell is a favourite of mine," observed Miss Mac-Eure.

"Which of the ladies means to honour me with her company on horseback?" said Rupert; at which question Clara darted upon him so tragedy-queen a glance of suspicion and indignation, as, had he not at that moment been shortening his stirrups, must have cut him to the very heart.

"Are you all ready, girls?" said Lady

Annabella, who just then appeared, having kept them waiting upwards of twenty minutes, herself. Upon the expected reply, her ladyship, Jaqueline, and Mary, got into the carriage; and Clara was pretending to follow, when Rupert took her hand, to lead her to her horse.

"No, I thank you, Mr. Ullesbey; I am obliged to you, Sir, but I had rather not. I cannot comprehend the use, Mary, of your perching yourself up there, when you're expected to ride, and you perfectly well know you are."

"What strange whim is this?" said Miss Mac-Eure, resting her head upon her hand, and leaning back, worried and annoyed.

"I wish you would settle, my loves," said Lady Annabella, "which is to go in the sociable, and which not."

"Tell the coachman to proceed, Ma'am," cried Jaqueline; "for Mary has no more intention of riding, than Clara either has, or ever had, of going in the carriage."

This advice was straightway followed;

and Miss Cothelston, after a pacificatory speech from Rupert, treating of her inconceivable error, and the pleasure he had looked forward to that morning for, through the whole preceding week, suffered herself to be placed upon her horse.

They had driven about half a mile from the park gate, when Jaqueline, who was diverting herself at her sister's expense (and, to say the truth, with such drollery, that Mary, who would fain have discouraged it, could not help laughing, if it had been to save her existence), broke off, at once, and colouring highly, begged her mother,—though, as they both sat backwards, she might as well have done so herself,—to stop the coachman: nor was she at all ready with her answer, when asked the reason for such a measure; but stammering out a few words, relative, as it seemed, to something she had left behind, she rose with intention to stop him herself. The young lady, however, when standing upright, could more distinctly perceive that a man on horseback, upon the hill to their

left, having, as she imagined, discovered the sociable and attendants, immediately altered his former course in the direction of Peterstow, and continued to move along the top of the hill, in a line parallel with them. Again he paused, when he saw the carriage stand still; and it was not till Miss Jaqueline recollected that she had *not* left her parasol at home, but on the contrary, produced it from under one of the cushions, that both the cavalier aloft, and company on the road, advanced together.

The former never came down to the public highway; but when the road turned, in order to keep the valley, he made them a low and very graceful bow—hat in hand, and cantering away over the hill, was soon out of sight. Just before this evolution, Lady Annabella reconnoitred him with her glass: "I do declare," said she, "if that is not Mr. Bentley Carruthers, I never in my life saw any person sit upon a horse so like him; did you, Jaqueline? Nay, child, you 're looking exactly the opposite way,—you 're asleep, I believe!"

"Why, really, Ma'am, most people, when they want to point out an object to one, are apt to describe whether it is on the right hand or the left. Oh! yes, yes, I see now: 't is he, certainly. I had not the least idea he was in the country: we all thought, you know, he had been in Warwickshire."

"Did you, my dear?" said her mother; "I can't say I thought a very great deal about the matter."

This gentleman, as may be easily supposed, had no more escaped the notice of our equestrians, than of the people in the carriage; and Rupert, on being informed who he was, and remembering how little information he could extract from Miss Mac-Eure, expressed considerable curiosity respecting him.

"In the first place," said Miss Cothelston, who had none of her cousin's reluctance to holding forth upon this topic, "'t is a monstrous piece of conceit, his styling himself Bentley, for his name is Samuel; and when a boy, he was always called Sam Carruthers, and nothing else."

"He was also christened Bentley, I have understood," observed Rupert.

"That may be," said she; "Dr. Carruthers himself is an inoffensive quiet person; exceedingly well off in the world however, and they say he is rich: but the mother's weak, depend upon it; I do not mean universally so, or silly—only weak in spoiling this young man."

"Has he left the university?" Ullesbey asked.

"Oh, yes,—these two or three years; and having got into company, by his dancing and music, and activity, and jack-pudding sort of tricks, he refuses to belong to any profession, except the army, which he well knows the Doctor will never hear of; and he sets himself up—I give you my word—for as fine a gentleman as Sir Poole Preston,—we 'll say,—or any other man of weight in the county."

"No! does he, by Jove?" said Rupert. "Pshaw! he has just turned away, when I was in hopes we should have seen a little more of him."

" Don't make yourself uneasy," replied Miss Cothelston; " we have not done with him yet. He has ascertained our plan, and is only going the straightest way to the place, which we, being forced to keep along with Mamma, must reach by a circuit. He fancies himself, you'll be excessively diverted to hear, in love with Jaqueline! having, perhaps, commenced his assiduities in the family,—however, that does n't signify."

" Is he not," said Rupert, " very particularly well looking?"

" Eh,—some think so, I fancy,—a good many, I admit; but who attends to beauty in a man? and yet that constitutes pretty much the whole of Mr. Samuel Carruthers' pretensions to aspire to this family."

Now Rupert, who, allowing for the sanguine expectations of success in life, perhaps inseparable from his age, was an exceedingly diffident young man, and by no means rated his own pretensions at any thing nearly equal to those of Mr. Carruthers, grew disconcerted at her last observation, and Clara saw he did.

"I consider HIM," resumed the lady, "as an assuming person, and merely talked with reference to any views he may pretend to have upon my sister; but for myself, I know, I shall not suffer in your estimation, by speaking with my accustomed candour. Though my education has, I trust, been of a sort to prevent my disgracing the very highest rank, it must likewise render me fit for the duties of any situation that I may be called to fill; a competence, therefore, with such a man as I could really love, will be the utmost that I shall ever look forward to."

"And the natural result, Miss Cothelston, of the admirable education you have enjoyed," returned Rupert, all in a glow, "is your mode of thinking; at once amiable, philosophical, and tending to the only true felicity this world is equal to bestow. But you would be difficult, I doubt," added he, with a face of more dismay than he seriously felt, "about the person whom you thus distinguished by your regard?"

"Less so, perhaps, than you imagine:

all I should wish for, would be a man of rational pursuits and sound sense; I don't so much mean learning, the sole fruit of which, is frequently an arrogant indisposition to admit the merit of any body else,— but good sound sense: a man, I say, of whose undiminished affection I could, under all circumstances, be assured, and with a perfect conformity of opinion between us, upon every subject——"

"Of importance," added Ullesbey.

"Upon every subject whatever, my friend,—my good friend,—if I may venture to call you so," said Clara. "Little things form the whole comfort, or discomfort, of one's life."

"When you honour me with the appellation of your friend, Miss Clara," observed Rupert, "you not only flatter me,— but, I take the liberty to add,—in the utmost degree, delight me!" Here he looked up, with a sort of a smile, and she looked down, with a sort of a smile, and they rode on, in silence, for nearly a quarter of an hour, by which time they had reached the

highest point of ground that was to occur in their way.

From the spacious down which they were now crossing, they were refreshed by a brisk breeze, or rather gale of wind, never failing in those exposed regions, and charmed by an extensive prospect, comprehending almost every object that can be styled noble or beautiful: villages, interspersed with trees; fields white for the harvest; the splendid seats of grandeur and opulence, embosomed in wood; and a town and harbour, in the extreme distance: while nearly two thirds of all that the eye could command, seemed to be surrounded by the boundless ocean.

"That low, gray house, among the stunted trees," observed Miss Cothelston, "is where we are to perform our visit."

"And an interesting situation, too," replied Rupert, whose feelings, already excited, were worked up to enthusiasm by the scene around them; "I declare—I have a strong impression,—I would say, Miss Cothelston,—I 've a notion, that two

people of congenial minds might live in that kind of seclusion ; and without positive misery, either."

"Hardly, in that house," said Clara "for every single door opens directly opposite to a fireplace; so that, through the greater part of the year, while your hands and face are scorching, your back is colder than death itself."

They were received with clamorous greeting and shrill hospitality by Miss Sophia Sudwell, the elder of these ladies: she came out, unincumbered by hat or bonnet, to meet them, and shook hands with every body, twice with most, and walked them and talked them in to her sister Theresa; who, though without, probably, a jot more of intrinsic merit, happened to be by much the milder, the pleasanter, and most like a gentlewoman of the two.

In the drawing-room, as Clara Cothelston had foretold, and as Jaqueline, who never spoke a word about it, had foreseen, sat Mr. Bentley Carruthers: though, at

the approach of the Peterstow party, he not only abandoned his own chair, but appeared to place four others at once for the ladies. Ullesbey took as complete a survey of him as he could, without rudeness, and thought that, unfavourable as it generally is to people to have their personal advantages cried up beforehand, he never yet had seen, figure and countenance together, so handsome a man; nor was he slack in observing how the other would be received by Lady Annabella and the Misses. His manners to the mother and Clara were extremely civil of course; though easy, full easy, as it struck Rupert. Towards Mary Mac-Eure they were somewhat constrained: Ullesbey thought them distant or cold in that quarter. But Jaqueline he distinguished from the rest: with her he was more ceremonious perhaps; some might say he seemed acting a part, but he was particular at any rate. Meanwhile the damsel, half curtseying, half bowing, but with an air of greater indifference than there was any occasion for, avcided looking directly

towards him, and drew a chair into a corner of the room, behind the circle; where, during the time that Mr. Carruthers was talking to the others, she, who took no part in the conversation, showed, pretty evidently, that she could not keep her eyes off him. Before the eldest Miss Sudwell had finished a discourse upon a new method of her own for rearing young turkeys, which she addressed to Lady Annabella, who, except from seeing them brought up at table, could scarce be said to know that such animals as turkeys were in existence, Clara Cothelston, observing that she had long set her heart upon a walk from their house to Staplebourn point (a knoll on the highest part of the down, about three miles off), inquired what should hinder them from trying it now: and nothing indeed, but civility toward those whom they came to visit, and must in consequence leave instantly, if this scheme were put in practice, could have opposed any obstacle.

Rupert and Carruthers, with the instinctive horror of all young men for a

morning visit, professed themselves charmed with the proposal; and Jaqueline, as may readily be imagined, whatever she might say on the subject, had no disposition to be left out.

"Shall you, Ma'am, undertake this expedition?" said Miss Cothelston.

"My dear," replied her mother, "you may as reasonably talk of my drawing the whole party back to Peterstow. No: I mean to encroach a little longer upon the kindness of our friends, and shall expect one of you, at the least, to stay here with me. I never heard of so foolish a scheme, Clara. You 'll be tired to death, you 'll come home without any appetite, you 'll be asleep all the evening, and—— Stop! as the Staplebourn point is so close to Crowtonglass, my best way, I suppose, will be to go round and take you up there; and I do desire, since I go out of my way for your amusement, that I mayn't have an hour to wait in that detestable town."

The arrangement as to which should remain at Kirkby, might have afforded

ground for very lively dispute, had Mary Mac-Eure (for, that more than one should do it, was out of all question) volunteered the duty; taking thereby all trouble from Lady Annabella, preventing a quarrel, and in some measure satisfying the Miss Sudwells for the desertion of the others.

It was just at this time that a slight incident occurred, which, for a moment, astonished Ullesbey. In following Mr. Carruthers down stairs, he not only thought that a certain movement of the latter with his hand, expressed disgust or vexation, but that he actually heard him fret; a surmise which was soon put beyond doubt, by Carruthers' pronouncing these words audibly,

"So it ever has—and so it ever will be! Some cross, unexpected, infernal circumstance arises, just when——"

On looking round him, however, and discovering Rupert close at his heels, the soliloquy came to a sudden termination; and, for aught that appeared, his former complacency was again restored: inso-

much, that while they were waiting before the house for the Miss Cothelstons to join them, Carruthers thus addressed his companion:

"What do you do with yourself at Peterstow, of a morning, Mr. Ullesbey?"

"Very much, what one does with one's self any where else, I think—ride, or drive—or something of that sort."

"Oh! oh! You 've your own horses here, have you?" continued the former.

"Not I."

"Why then, how d' ye mean, ride? He has not a horse in his stable, I 'm told."

"He has enough to enable me to ride here to-day, and Miss Cothelston besides."

"Let 's have a look at 'em," said Carruthers, in full march to the stable, which was near at hand. "I see, Sir, I see. Those in the second and third stalls must be the two—that 's plain enough. What affairs!"

The ladies now making their appearance, as Ullesbey announced from his post at the stable door, they loitered a little be-

fore they set out: Carruthers swinging himself upon a chain between two posts, and the rest standing around.

"No bad thought of mine, I flatter myself—this excursion—considering the immeasurable heaviness that seemed impending," said Clara: a position to which Ullesbey agreed.

"Say so at once, Mr. Carruthers, if it does not suit you," observed the younger sister, piqued perhaps at the tardiness of that gentleman's assent.

"Not suit me! It has scarce left me a wish upon earth! So we 're to have a walk, a perambulation, a pilgrimage——"

"You object then to my sister's proposal?"

"Far from it—in such society; but under other circumstances, my rule is, never to go on my legs when I can ride to a place."

"I hope he will break through none of his rules, on our account," said Jaqueline, addressing the remark to her sister.

"Now, Miss Jaqueline, that observation

just proves you to have a proper, discreet, and well-regulated mind."

"How so, Sir?" she replied, with one of her stares, and one of her gravest too.

"Because otherwise you would have known the exquisite pleasure of breaking rules, and not been so ill-natured as to deny it to me."

"We have all heard of Mr. Carruthers' horsemanship, and skill in various accomplishments," observed Clara; "but if he were to ride where we are going this morning, it would be the most extraordinary feat, I believe, that he ever performed yet. I never could have had it in my contemplation, of course, to toil for three or four miles over the bare dull down; what I want is to proceed by the glen, and explore the Iron Valley as they call it: that is a much nearer way, though more hilly, I admit, which to us on foot will not signify a rush."

Mr. Carruthers, upon this, called to a person in the stable; and having given special orders about some boy in the village

who was to bring over his mare to Crowtonglass, enforcing it upon the groom, that if he intrusted her to any other than the very boy mentioned, Heaven only knew what would the dreadful result; he rose to proceed upon their expedition.

"I have n't seen that dell among the rocks," said he, "since Willingham broke his leg there. It 's a fine thing certainly."

"The Valley of Iron?" observed Ullesbey, "why, Iron?"

"'T is frequently impossible to account for those kind of names," returned the other. "Either iron works were carried on there formerly, or iron ore has been found there, or——"

"Here 's Miss Mac-Eure!" cried Rupert; and sure enough Mary was seen equipped for a walk, and hastening across the lawn towards them.

"I thought it had been settled, my dear, that you were to stay at Kirkby, with your bosom friend Theresa," said Jaqueline.

"So thought I," returned Mary; "but

my aunt never liked the idea of your walking as far as Crowtonglass; and since you left the house, she has been liking it less and less every minute; and then Miss Sudwell has favoured her with a history of a particular friend of her own, who had a promising daughter, I think, and this daughter came to some woful mischief—what, I did n't exactly collect; but as I heard the words, putrid fever and over-exercise, you will not be surprised that the plans are all changed, or that I am sent to attend you to see that you only take a reasonable stroll, and bring you all safe back again."

This wavering of resolution in Lady Annabella was abused by one of her daughters, and Miss Sudwell ridiculed by the other; while both agreed, that the Iron Valley they must and would see, whatever the weather and whatever the distance. Rupert, hereupon, offered an arm to Miss Cothelston, which was accepted; and Mr. Carruthers another to Jaqueline, but without the same immediate success; the lat-

ter young lady inclining to the opinion, apparently, either that he had been remiss in the tender of that attention, or that he came forward at present with too careless and confident an air. She flung away, therefore, and walking on at a quicker pace than the rest, soon got considerably in advance of them.

" Miss Mac-Eure, I presume," said Carruthers, now falling into the rear to join Mary, " will disdain the offer of assistance that has been already declined by her cousin."

" Not at all," she replied, laughing, " as I shall probably convince you, whenever we come to a steep hill, even although your other arm should be actually engaged; but at the outset I had much rather walk alone than be encumbered with a supporter: besides which, Jaqueline has not refused your aid—you know she has not."

" How can you say so?"

" Pooh, pooh!" cried Mary; " you understand her ways. Go and propose it once more."

An expression of haughty displeasure lowered for an instant upon the brow of young Carruthers. He by no means seemed to relish this advice, but muttered something about airs and caprices that should not be indulged; to which remarks, howaver, when he saw Mary determined to pay no heed, he resumed the pretence of treating the whole as a jest, and, overtaking Jaqueline, prevailed upon her to accept of his escort with less difficulty than might have been expected.

In descending gradually from the summit of the down on which stood the Miss Sudwell's habitation, they lost sight, first, of the line of bold and towering cliffs, commencing almost immediately beneath Kirkby lodge, and extending in a northerly course to the town of Crowtonglass; then, of the Crowtonglass headland itself, which stretched far out to sea; and, in something less than a quarter of an hour, of the sea-view altogether. By this time they had got below the whole range of hills, on the Peterstow side; and continued to

advance, though with no such delectable facility, over the tangled, broken, and irregular surface of a heath, on which few paths were to be discovered, and those so questionable as to afford but indifferent relief; with no prospect on their left but the interminable waste, and as little in their front indeed, excepting at the utmost extremity of the horizon, where the moor appeared to soften into wood. On the right hand things wore a pleasanter aspect: a deep ravine lay close beneath them, from whence rose, somewhat abruptly, a long though not very high hill, producing a wondrous improvement among the features of the country in that direction; the whole bank being covered by rocks, which, at first scarcely appearing from the midst of the underwood that surrounded them, soon increased in dimensions, and became wilder, and more grotesque in shape, as they approached a bend of the hills to the eastward, by which they were for a while concealed from the further observation of our party.

Round that point, as Mr. Carruthers observed, unless he had entirely forgotten the lay of the country, was the valley they were in quest of; and, in order to get there, it became expedient to go down at once into the ravine below: where, by the side of the bourn that flowed through the glen, they found a very good footway; so good, that, according to the opinion of some in the company, it might not have been impracticable, or perhaps insurmountably disagreeable, to have ventured upon riding there. But that assertion was not hazarded without a contradiction from Miss Jaqueline; who first denied the possibility of the measure altogether, and, on being driven from that ground, declared, that as she and Mary came out with her mother in the carriage, they had no means of riding; Messrs. Carruthers and Ullesbey, therefore, with her sister, must have done so by themselves; and she concluded with heartily wishing they had. Young Carruthers, rather diverted than hurt by this attack, was defending himself from the

imputation of still entertaining a lingering preference for equestrianism, and enumerating the agrémens of trudging on foot, in a manner calculated to provoke instead of soothe the fair one—when Miss Cothelston began to take some exceptions to their situation. They were, as she represented, in a strange wild part of the country, a long way from home; and, from what she had heard of the habits of the people in those villages about the coast, if only one man had been with them, she made no scruple in saying, that she should have felt unwilling to proceed; but as there were a couple of gentlemen at hand, it was a different thing she admitted, nor could she of course (though the latter was not spoken without a degree of hesitation) entertain, at present, any thing like apprehension.

"If those kind of fears are merely assumed," said her sister, whose spleen had by no means as yet subsided, "I must confess, for one, that there is little interesting in them to me. If not—really, people who

are troubled with such fancies, had better never stir from their mother's apron-string."

Clara coloured, and meditated as sharp a retort as should be consistent with the appearance of cool contempt—perhaps a little sharper; but was prevented by Miss Mac-Eure, who agreed perfectly with her cousin in protesting, that had not their party been so strong, she should have been as reluctant as the other to roam any further through those rude and remote parts, quite unconnected with Mr. Cothelston's property or influence; and the more particularly, since she was convinced that she and Clara had both been struck by the same object.

"Some person was undoubtedly, at that minute, loitering among those rocks," she said; "and how many other idle people might be about,—who could tell?"

Thus supported, Miss Cothelston once more turned to retaliate upon Jaqueline, when, as if fate had determined to deny her that gratificatior, Rupert Ullesbey, who had been round the hill, and heard not a

syllable of the last short conversation, now returned in high enthusiasm. Again he possessed himself of Clara's arm, and, by absolute compulsion, dragged her away to a spot from which—(though no mighty admirer of the beauties of nature, unless every thing else went smoothly with her when called upon to be delighted)—she could not, on this occasion, but partake in his transports.

"Is not this stupendous?" said she.

"Thank you a thousand times for thinking of the walk," cried Ullesbey; "in my days I never beheld a grander scene!"

"You might have got thus far on horseback, Mr. Carruthers; but how would you have contrived to explore the rocks afterwards?" observed Clara, as the others came round to join them.

Carruthers made no reply, being charmed, in good earnest, with the view now opening before him, which he stood as if lost in contemplation of.

"Would not one swear," cried Rupert,

"that the rocks on each side positively meet further up, and debar all passage?"

"Magnificent, indeed!" exclaimed Mary Mac-Eure, "and nearly two miles in length, as I have been told. This end of the glen looks like what I should conceive to be the commencement of a great mountainous district."

"So it does—so it does," said Carruthers. "All last summer I was in Scotland, and this has quite the character of a Highland pass--it has, I assure you."

At this juncture, a short thick young man, of no prepossessing appearance, to whom our friends seemed a more important subject for speculation than any scenery whatever, advanced close towards the group, reconnoitred them all round, touched his hat, and withdrew.

"Who's that? I have seen him before," observed Jaqueline.

"I too ought to know him, I feel confident," added Ullesbey.

"Is it not Robert Watts, the man who

was the Sudwells' servant, and now lives with Mr. Holtofte?" said Mary.

"Here, you!—Here, you, Sir!—This way.—Come back!" shouted Carruthers. "Now, then, whom do you seek here, Sir?"

"Nobody, Sir; that is—I suppose I've mistook the place. I was a-looking for a gentleman; but—but—he is n't here seemingly."

"Has the gentleman any name?"

"Yes, Sir; but master never said I was to tell it."

"Did he say you were not?"

The other walked away without answering; and Mr. Carruthers suppressed—probably from motives of delicacy by Mary Mac-Eure—a pretty tart remark, which was at his tongue's end, bearing directly upon Mr. Holtofte, and not without allusion to some of that person's associates.

CHAPTER XII.

SOON after this occurrence, their conversation was, for the moment, entirely interrupted, and by no unusual event either: it might have been foreseen when they left Kirkby; and, had they consulted with the gardener, to a certainty it would have been foretold. The sun, which for the last ten minutes had shone but feebly and suspiciously, at once ceased from shining at all; and an obstinate, black, uncomfortable cloud, that they had long seen with jealousy hovering upon the heights to the westward, now, like the confirmation of a disagreeable report, excited the fretfulness of the party, by descending in palpable rain upon their heads. All attentions of the formal and pretty-behaved order were, for the present, at an end. Carruthers, fairly catching up Miss Jaqueline in his

arms, ran with her across the narrow valley, leaping—clear almost—over some of the large fragments of rock which were scattered hereabouts; and barely resting upon others with one foot, as he surmounted every difficulty, in a way that commanded Rupert's admiration. The latter meanwhile scrambled on as well as he could with his own precious charge, who was not of dimensions to be so safely carried, by him at least, over those enormous rugged stones, towards the same point; to one of the caves, that is to say, at the foot of the rock, three or four of which, at great distances apart, were to be met with in this grand and singular spot.

Here they found shelter sufficient; and though Clara favoured them with a few detached observations, not totally unmingled with impatience—particularly when she dwelt upon the wetting which her new bonnet had already undergone—it was remarkable that her sister, who perhaps might reasonably have been allowed in some degree of displeasure at a gallantry on the

part of her conductor so nearly approaching to freedom, not only repressed all complaint, but appeared gayer and livelier than at any former part of the day.

"This shower," said she, "has varied the incidents of our walk agreeably enough: but for the rain, we never should have seen any thing of these caves, which they talk much of, I know, and make a piece of work about."

"One of them stretches—the deuce knows how far—under the hills," observed Carruthers; "and this, for any thing I can make out, may be the one."

"As the rain will probably keep us some time prisoners," said Ullesbey, "it might n't be bad fun to trace this cave as far as we can penetrate."

Jaqueline freely came into his proposal: Miss Cothelston, on the other hand, shrunk from it, and started objections.

"Shall we—Mr. Carruthers and I—go forward a little way first?" said Rupert.

"How does the sky look, Jaqueline?"

asked Clara: "Mamma will make a sad fuss if she has to wait."

While the sisters were intent upon the weather, young Carruthers, who had already adventured deeper into the interior than any body else, came back in a hurry, and touched Rupert's arm.

"By Heavens, Sir, we can never remain here with those girls!" said he in a whisper: "there's no saying what description of people may be in the cave at this instant! See any one, I certainly did not, for it's as dark as pitch; but if I did n't feel a man's hand and sleeve, may I never stir from this place alive!"

Clara Cothelston, even before this adventure, had not at all relished the idea of exploring the cavern; and upon her, neither the whispering nor signs of astonishment in Mr. Carruthers' countenance were, in any respect, thrown away: she joined them, therefore, in much perturbation, declaring her persuasion that dangerous persons were hidden there, and insisted upon

quitting the cave that moment, though it should rain a deluge.

These terrors, being expressed in a querulous tone, to the full as loud as she commonly conversed, were perfectly audible to the individual in the further recesses, who, till then, had been doubting whether he should present himself to the company (every one of whom he knew as well as he knew his own hat or coat), or suffer them to go away undisturbed.

The last alternative he would have preferred; but being partly discovered already, with a laugh as full and unconstrained as he could possibly muster up, he now burst into the light, assuring them that all the wonders of their retreat would have been soon disclosed, since he, who only took shelter there a few minutes before themselves, had penetrated to its utmost depth.

"Gracious Goodness! is it you, Mr. Alderstoke?" cried Clara. "I was thinking to see a pirate, or a smuggler, or some horrid, lawless, ferocious vagabond!"

"One for ever meets him in these bye

out-o'-the-way places," said Carruthers, who, though with a show of intimacy, detested the other for various reasons; and not the least of them, because his own father had been cheated of some property in Mac-Eure's transactions, which the young man always counted upon as his own.

"Come—what's your scheme now, Alderstoke? Tell us honestly for once—there's a good fellow! What design brought you here to-day?"

"I have enjoyed the advantage of your acquaintance, Mr. Bentley Carruthers," returned the other drily, since you were a child of about nine years old; and—you'll excuse me—but I never yet could discover any thing in your character quite awful enough to induce me to answer a question put so very unceremoniously. If the Miss Cothelstons, however, or Mr. Ullesbey, wish to be informed why they find me here, to THEM I reply, that I had ordered a fisherman to meet me with his boat at the little bay below Kirkby, for the purpose of conveying me as far as Lyn-

vanha head, and was on my road to the bay when overtaken by this shower."

"Three half-crowns to one that I give you the fisherman's name," cried Carruthers—"Wadd, Wogg, or Wode; and a pretty bird he is moreover."

"I call him a sullen odious wretch," said the youngest girl.

"Nay, nay; allow me to say you are prejudiced, Miss Jacqueline," replied Alderstoke: "his figure he cannot help, and he is a simple, industrious, inoffensive—— Zounds—Robert! What's in the wind now?"—a somewhat unguarded exclamation, forced from him by the same person unexpectedly presenting himself at the mouth of the cave, who had before been scrutinizing his companions.

Carruthers sneered at this involuntary display of emotion; and at the dark and indignant scowl which, under that provocation, Mr. Alderstoke cast towards him, he laughed aloud. Nothing, however, remained for the former but to swallow down

his wrath; and it is said, that notwithstanding long and necessary practice in habits of dissimulation, he did not make the effort just now without great pain and difficulty: then, leading forth the man into the air (despite of the prolonged rain), to a convenient distance from the cavern, he briefly, but pretty intelligibly, stated his surprise, disappointment, and displeasure, at meeting him on this occasion, instead of Waugh, for whom he had been waiting the last two hours.

With a familiar vulgar impudence, extremely offensive to his auditor, Watts replied, that he could easily have been there before, but for certain attractions at the King's Arms, at Ampfield; adding, that he was woundily afraid Mr. Alderstoke had taken himself off, when he found nobody but a parcel of trim young squires and lasses in the valley.

"Long and long ago I saw them," muttered Alderstoke; "a murrain on them —with their idleness, and picturesque, fantastical folly! As for you,—you have con-

ducted yourself very improperly,—which your master shall hear of; and you might as well be at the King's Arms still, for any information you seem to give me, now you are come. Where is that impracticable scoundrel Waugh?"

"If this here don't let you know a thing or two about him, Sir,—I 've got nothing else to say—I 'm sure," returned Mr. Holtofte's lacquey, producing a note in that gentleman's hand-writing; which his ally tore open with much vehemence—read a small portion of—and struck himself so desperate a blow on the head, that the man, apprehensive probably lest some other head should be favoured next, slunk back a few paces.

"Why does the fellow stand staring at one in that ill-mannered offensive way?" cried Mr. Alderstoke: "Go back to your master.—Tell him you have seen me,—and —and—d 'ye hear?—tell him you 've seen me: that will be sufficient."

"Ill-mannered,—hey!" said Robert Watts, as he retreated, grumbling; "Gad-

so! I wonder how 't will be in the t' other world; I wonder if the black gentleman will let the courtly rogues carry it all over the poor rogues,—as they does, in this;—" with much besides, to the same purpose, of which Mr. Alderstoke heard no more than he chose, confining himself to the perusal of Holtofte's communication,—and that, to say the truth, was vexation enough for one time, and imparted the following tidings.

"If you wait at the Iron Vale till you are joined by that Danish villain, you may wait long enough. He 'll be your ruin, my man; and you may thank your own contrivances for it: you may thank that miserable trick you have, of scheming, and manœuvring, to form a party for yourself, and get your own creatures about you. I had made all the use I ever intended of the brute, and had done with him; and would soon have got him out of the country, or starved him in it; when you must needs set him up again, as a tool of your own. Now see, what 's the end of your work! I never could keep my temper with

him, and we've quarrelled outright, this very morning,—on my soul and body we have! and the sulky sour malignant dog not only refuses to stir from his kennel, but his threats are of such a nature,"—(the last few words being doubly and trebly scored under),—" that you must either come over to pacify him, or something decisive will be done,—and that quickly, my gay and tender Master Alderstoke, I can promise you.

" Yours, in hellish perplexity,

" R. H."

Alderstoke concluded this epistle in a perspiration, which started profusely from his forehead, and was felt at his very fingers' ends: a mist seemed gathering before him, —his thoughts became confused,—and how to act, he was able to form no immediate conception.

The rising wind had now dispersed the clouds; but supposing the rain to have pelted with tenfold fury, he probably would have remained unconscious of it; and scarcely was he recalled to a knowledge

of where he stood, and what was passing around him, by the Miss Cothelstons and their company, who at this time were set at liberty by a gleam of sunshine. To the sarcasms of Mr. Carruthers he offered no retort whatever; he assented, with a faint unmeaning smile, to the remarks of the others; and with apologies for leaving them, had made up his mind to hasten homeward through the glen without delay,—when the whole party were suddenly placed in a most unpleasant and alarming predicament. That appearance in the scenery around, which has once before been alluded to, producing an effect as if both lines of rock closed in together about the midway, and entirely choked up the path,—was caused by the winding of the valley, which prevented our friends (at the spot that they had now reached) from seeing, in a straight direction, six yards before them; the glen, also, was here so contracted by the rocks on either side, that two persons could hardly walk abreast.

Mary Mac-Eure was most advanced;

Rupert, with Clara holding by his arm, followed next; and at a little distance, in the rear, were Mr. Carruthers and the younger sister, both occupied in tormenting Alderstoke with questions, which they pressed the keener, the more they perceived his irritation and impatience. All at once, a clattering noise was heard from the farther part of the valley, which seemed to make the very earth shake beneath them; and, as Carruthers said afterwards, it was more like a troop of cavalry charging through the glen, than any thing else,—and no marvel, either, when the cause came to be known! Mary stopped, the noise increasing and appearing to approach her; while Clara, whose feelings (and the passion of fear amongst them) were ever yielded to, looked frightened out of her senses. In the alarm of the moment, she doubted from which end of the valley the sounds proceeded; wherever they came from, she deemed it expedient to scream most powerfully, and running forward to Mary MacEure, clasped her so tight, as was well

calculated to have ensured the death of them both ; for a horse, tearing on at full gallop, wild with fright, and still more terrified at the screaming, burst out from behind the rock, and bore down full upon them in that narrow path. These foremost females stood in horror, and utter dismay ; Clara, making no kind of attempt to get out of the way, and Mary, if she had retained her presence of mind, being prevented by her cousin from stirring a step. Young Carruthers was the individual of the party best suited to meet a danger of this description, and no sooner did he get a glimpse of their actual peril, than he quitted his companions, and rushed on with intent to pull the others so close under the rocks, as to leave a free passage ; but there was no time for it. The horse, when first in sight, was within a few feet of them, and must have dashed them to the ground in an instant, had not Rupert, in total ignorance what measures to take, resolved, at all events, to hazard his own person for their preservation. Hat in hand, waving it

at the horse, to drive him back, and shouting with all his might, he had just time to interpose; and planting himself steadily and firmly between the two girls and their approaching destruction,—most providentially,—beyond all hope, or imagination even,—he did succeed in saving them. Not that the horse turned about, any more than the flowing tide would have receded for their accommodation, but swerved an inch or two, and lashing out as he went by, struck Rupert down with a kick which took effect upon his shoulder: then, having completely passed the two cousins, he slipped on a large smooth stone, fell all along, and while struggling to recover his legs, was secured by Carruthers, with uncommon strength, judgment, and dexterity. Before this was effected, Jaqueline Cothelston, whose nature partook but little of timidity, had advanced to assist her favourite if possible in mastering the animal. Mr. Alderstoke, on the contrary,—for, in his mind, present evil was always the predominant impulse,—lost, for the moment, all sense of

his other embarrassments, and no sooner did he discern the threatening incursion, than he resolved upon instant and effective measures for the security of one of the party at least. There was a flat ledge of rock some yards above his head, which nourished a slight vegetation of gorse, and a few short and sickly shrubs ; nor did he question that he should easily reach this point, by means of a channel not quite perpendicular, worn by the occasional descent of waters from above. He accordingly made the attempt, and with more activity, too, than might have been counted upon ; but with such nervous precipitation, that, at the height of above fifteen feet from the ground, he deviated from the bed of the torrent (his sole aid in the ascent), to a bank of miry, red, slippery clay ; whence, after repeated plunges and sprawlings, he slid down—rolling all through the mud and dirt, and about the time that the danger was surmounted, came tumbling head-over-heels upon the path again.

When this provident personage became

duly sensible that he was once more upon the level earth, which did not happen immediately, he tarried not to inquire, commend, soothe, or congratulate: but hurried on towards Peterstow, leaving Ullesbey much shaken and bruised; indeed, at that juncture, in considerable pain; and the rest of the party so wrapt up in concern for themselves, or Rupert, that they had no attention to bestow upon him. Mr. Carruthers perceiving that the horse, which he still kept a tight hold of, could not be made to stand still, as long as certain broken traces continued flapping about him (attached to which were pieces of shattered plated harness, of the most recent and fashionable description), applied for Rupert's assistance to clear the beast from those incumbrances; and the latter had but just time to give it, before he turned pale, grew sick and giddy, and was obliged to sit down on the ground, leaning his back against the rock.

"Clara is so full of her own sensations, for which nobody cares a fig," said Jaque-

line, apart to Miss Mac-Eure, " that she seems entirely to forget the condition of her particular friend, here—who, I believe, is seriously hurt."

Mary appeared much distressed; she went up to Rupert, and offering him her salts to smell,—" I fear you have received a terrible blow," said she; " you cannot get up: no, no, don't make the attempt."

He laughed, and treated the matter lightly, admitting, however, that he felt uneasy just at present.

" Ha—ha—ha! I'll take my oath,—this is Sir Poole Preston's famous young horse, that was to be sent down to Molesden, the day after I left London. Ha—ha—ha! he has proved a match for the Baronet, I suspect!" observed Carruthers.

" What do you say?" cried Clara; " you do not suppose that any mischief has happened to Sir Poole?"

" If Sir Poole should have broke both legs, both arms, and three of his ribs, Miss Cothelston," said he, casting a glance at

Rupert, "you may recollect that it did not occur in your service."

"And who ever said it did?" she pettishly replied. "I am sure 't is impossible for any human being to be more afflicted about another, than I am about Mr. Ullesbey's sad accident."

"How are we ever to rejoin my mother?" said Jaqueline.

"Considering the state of this gentleman," replied Carruthers, "we can no more return to Kirkby as we came here, than we could trudge on foot from hence to Lancaster. One of us should go back and bring the carriage to Stotham hut, the nearest point on the public road to this dell, and a long half mile, I fear, even that. I'd be bound to be at Kirkby in forty minutes or less: but who 's to hold the horse? Mr. Ullesbey can't, you see; and he is a valuable one, so that 't would be a shame to turn him adrift."

Upon this, Miss Jaqueline proffered her most zealous services, and with such eagerness, confidence, and positiveness, that

Carruthers had no means of quieting her, but by pretending to yield to her proposal; and with that view he delivered over the reins to her for a moment: but the instant the animal felt a different hand, he began to be so troublesome, that although, with her usual spirit, she would not let go, she must inevitably have been trampled under foot, had not the other taken care to remain close enough to her to repossess himself easily of his charge.

"How little one person ever enters into the feelings of another!" cried Clara. "I do wish any body could form an idea of my wretchedness about poor Mr. Ullesbey. I'm afraid, Mr. Ullesbey, you were kicked on the head, and if that's the case, it is of course impossible for you to hold the horse. This is more than an inconvenience, 't is a real heavy misfortune."

"A few minutes' patience," said Rupert, but his voice belied his assertions, "and I hope to be fully equal for that service, or even to undertake the walk to Kirkby."

"You know it to be out of all question," said Mary Mac-Eure. "But listen to me, and do, pray, none of you be violent and impetuous. Unless you detain me here by absolute force, I *will* go back to my aunt. I have thought it over, and am resolved upon it; and will bring her on, with the carriage and all the saddle-horses, to the place that Mr. Carruthers has mentioned."

"Not by yourself," cried Rupert.

"Oh, no, no! Miss Mac-Eure," added Carruthers. "Remember the apprehensions you yourself expressed before we got to the valley; and not unreasonably, for 't is a very bad part of the country, without doubt it is. I have no wish to exaggerate any thing; but in my opinion, a walk so far over that desolate part of the heath, cannot be ventured upon, by a young lady quite alone, without a degree of danger that it is excessively foolish to incur."

"There is some risk whenever we stir at all," she replied: "when we go down stairs to dinner of a day, there is a danger,

a possibility at least, that we may slip and break our necks."

"I own I do not understand," observed Miss Cothelston, out of humour, because the other had proved forwarder in this duty than herself, "how people can be so timid at one minute and so bold at another. Were you in earnest a while ago, Mary, when you agreed with me in being averse to coming on?"

"Oh!—all the difference in the world between coming and returning," said Mary, with a smile, as she set forth accompanied at last by her cousin Jaqueline; who laid hold of her arm without saying a word. Nor did young Carruthers urge any thing more to prevent her, though, for some cause or other, he seemed dissatisfied with the whole proceeding.

CHAPTER XIII.

We left Lady Annabella Cothelston seated placidly upon a small sofa in the drawing-room at Kirkby lodge, listening, with much serenity, to the unwearied flattery of the elder Miss Sudwell; who complimented her upon every advantage, remote, immediate, and ideal, that she was or might be possessed of; though dwelling with most particularity upon her looks, dress, and daughters. Nor, when her companion changed the topic, was her ladyship a whit more impatient or dissatisfied: she had but an imperfect conception, it must be admitted, what the other was talking about; but endeavoured to connect the discourse with the conceits constanly floating in her own mind, and soothed with the impression of being a great personage, condescending and affable, and of the pleasure that she

gave to her deserving neighbours by these attentions. She had no kind of objection to hear Miss Sudwell's tongue running on, and felt happy enough. Refreshment she of course, in the first instance, declined: of course, also, when it made its appearance, she played her part as readily as the rest; and when she strolled out upon the lawn with the eldest sister, it was some time after the shower that has been spoken of in another place. Then, unhappily, Lady Annabella taking it into her head to look at her watch, her complacency became disturbed; she announced that her daughters had been out more than an hour and a half; that they no more minded what she said to them on any occasion, than if she were a piece of waxwork; that those girls, with their headstrong doings, were the torment of her life, and would assuredly break her heart (not indeed immediately), but some of these days.

"Oh! but I hope your ladyship won't distress yourself," said, or rather continued, Miss Sudwell. "There can be no-

thing to fear as long as they have gentlemen with them. Young people, as your ladyship knows, will be young people.—And with regard to these stables, they certainly are, as your ladyship says, too——"

"I thought I could depend upon Mary," observed Lady Annabella.

"They 're too near the house, as you say, Ma'am, infinitely too near; and the worst is, we have neither the means of pulling them down or rebuilding them. Not but that labour is cheap, if we had any money at all; for the shoals of poor creatures that come over from Ireland in the spring and summer months, will work for their victuals alone almost."

"From Ireland?" said her ladyship.

"Yes, surely, Lady Annabella."

"It has often occurred to me," resumed the former, "that something excessively pretty and touching—something short—something pathetic—of the ballad order—you comprehend? might be got up out of the late troubles in that country. Conceive, for instance, the father of a Norah

or a Kathleen to have been deeply implicated in the rebellion; and the lover on the other hand——but I beg pardon, you were speaking."

"Oh! no, Ma'am. Not at all. Not in the least. I was only saying, that perhaps one could judge, in some degree, of the expense of planting out these frightful stables; running a hedge now, your ladyship sees, a pretty high hedge, laurel or holly, from this gate to the corner of the turnip-field: it could n't come to more than the walks we had cut in the wood, between us and the sea. Now ours is a sandy soil, as any one can discover, by the sort of reptiles it produces."

"Ay, reptiles!" cried Lady Annabella. "There 's a circumstance that may be thrown in, incidentally, and with an affecting application. They have no venomous reptiles."

"Indeed, but we have," returned Miss Sophia.

"There are no toads in Ireland," said Lady Annabella.

"There are plenty here, though," said Miss Sudwell; just as Jaqueline and Mary Mac-Eure, having achieved their expedition, not only without molestation, but without seeing a soul (except a blind man led by his little daughter, to whom they gave a shilling), appeared on the top of the down.

For a long while Lady Annabella stared, not comprehending a word they said; and for a still longer, when she began to understand them, she could not, or would not, be persuaded, but that Clara remained under such circumstances, that her life could not be depended upon from one minute to another.

"This comes of running about the country," she cried, "contrary to your father's directions, and my advice, prayers, and entreaties. I knew this would happen: I knew it as well——"

"How, Ma'am!" cried Jaqueline impetuously; "you *knew* that a horse would break loose from a carriage! and run where, I will venture to say, no coach-

horse was ever seen before since the creation?"

"Either that, or something of that sort," repeated her mother. "But, pray, do not keep me in suspense. Take me wherever you please, my dears, provided you take me somewhere, and let me do something."

Miss Sudwell bustled about accordingly, called the people, and ordered out the carriage; and her sister having now joined them, and been accurately informed by Mary as to the plans that were proposed, they soon gave all necessary directions to the servants, and the cavalcade stopped at the Stotham hut earlier even than had been expected by those who stood most in need of their arrival. They found the company that were lately left in the valley already assembled there: Rupert having walked, and without being much the worse for it; and as to Clara, her mother's anxiety upon her account was pretty speedily dispelled, by the sound of her voice, in lively chatter with Sir Poole Preston. From the latter, they were now regaled with an elaborate de-

fence of his own coachmanship, in the form of a dissertation upon the impossibility of managing young horses, supposing such and such a dealer in London to have been fool or rascal enough to send them down imperfectly broken: in the course of which harangue was introduced a detail of the snapping of his reins and the wreck of his phaeton: calamities softened, however, by the probable return of one flying steed to his stable at Molesden. Then followed the Baronet's own narrowest of all narrow escapes, and unheard-of luck, in getting the young horse safe again through Mr. Carruthers' alertness (after he had given him up for lost or ruined, when he descended precipitately from the road towards the glen); with all suitable encomiums upon that gentleman's dexterity and address. On an after-thought, moreover, in the nature of a postscript to a letter, he threw in lamentations, very bitter and becoming lamentations too, over the injury sustained by Mr. Ullesbey, and the terror of the young ladies; nor did he con-

clude, without apprizing them of his having met Mr. Alderstoke, as he pursued his horse into the valley, at the recollection of whose squalid, dirty, deplorable figure universal mirth was excited.

Sir Poole's misfortune had now been long enough over to afford him time for reflecting upon it; and the result of that reflection was, that, allowing previously for the accident, it would have been about forty to one against his getting off so well as he had done: he judged it best, therefore, to talk about it with carelessness, and, if he could, humour; at all events, to laugh at the jokes of others upon the subject, and to make people say how well he took it, and in what a truly gentleman-like manner. For this equanimity he had a motive additional to the general impression that he meant to give, as he professed a degree of partiality for Clara Cothelston, which had been sufficient to maintain a flirtation between them, off and on, for nearly a year and a half.

It happened to be "off" just now; but

the Baronet's friends having all left Molesden within this fortnight—he had since experienced such a touch of the tedium vitæ, as induced him to bring it "on" again. To be sincere with the reader, however, it behoves us to wave all mystery, and acknowledge, that Jaqueline, being by much the handsomer, was the one whom he, originally, by much, had preferred; but suspecting pretty early, that the nymph in question had either set her heart upon somebody else, or that, at any rate, she would have nothing to say to him—he drew back, in time to obviate any unflattering explanations; telling other men, and endeavouring to persuade himself, that she was only cold, because she had found out that his attentions meant nothing in reality, beyond his own temporary amusement.

It was on the latter account, that no inconsiderable sensation of disgust had passed, like a cutting easterly wind on a bright day in spring, over the self-satisfied mind of Sir Poole Preston, when he first espied young Carruthers in attendance

upon the Cothelston party, in the Iron Vale. He could not help regarding him—although he would have been ready to shoot any one else, for so much as hinting it—a little in the light of that most insufferable of all nuisances, a favoured rival: nor was that, by any means, all;—for the other, by talents, or liveliness, or some concurrence of accidents, had beeome established and acceptable to certain coteries, in which (though Sir Poole looked up to them) he was regarded, himself, with no particular reverence.

Mr. Carruthers, therefore, could hardly be classed among those persons whom the Baronet's disregard would be at all likely to affect:—inasmuch as, to his certain conviction, the former would not have given sixpence for all the notice, civility, or even friendship, which he could possibly extend to him.

Since, however, they were eternally condemned to be in each other's way, Sir Poole, after revolving the matter often, and deeply, in his thoughts, had decided for

intimacy. And perhaps he wisely decided: for, had war been declared, there is no saying, how far he might have been vexed and lowered by the superior advantages of his competitor, in every company where they stood a chance of meeting, throughout the county.

But to return to our friends at the Stotham hut. They were all accommodated with conveyances of one species or another, and at length—not, however, till seven in the evening—the whole train arrived at the Park, languid, exhausted, and voracious. In virtue of the expected invitation from the Squire, and assurances of every desirable comfort and accommodation, beds, hot water, soap, flannel, and scrubbing-brushes, if necessary — both Preston and Carruthers expressed themselves proud and happy, to remain at Peterstow: and after more than Mahommedan ablutions, they were by this time all seated around the table, at the close of a very late dinner.

Mr. Alderstoke, having thought it ex-

pedient to call, since his return to the village, had been asked to join the party; but, dreadfully jaded, worn with settling a dispute between Mr. Holtofte snd Waugh the peasant, which at last he could scarcely arrange, and labouring under a violent headache; he would infinitely rather have chosen to go quietly home—only that he did not altogether relish the idea of being talked over in his absence, and hoped, by his discretion, and conciliating behaviour, to obliterate any ill impressions which the events of the morning might have raised against him. He therefore (though not without misgivings) took his seat among the rest, and rather pretending to eat, and talking over the dishes, than in the least enjoying his meal—heartily wished it finished, and every individual around him, at—Constantinople—or any where else.

"I should have thought, Mr. Alderstoke," said the master of the house, "that if a good hearty dinner was ever necessary for a man, you must have stood

in need of it, to-day; but, as far as I see, you 've neither eat nor drank."

"He is pondering," observed Sir Poole Preston, who had taken it into his head, of all imaginable conceits, that he made Alderstoke his butt; "he is dreaming of the great bird's-nesting expedition that we have in petto among my cliffs. Don't you know, Mr. Cothelston, what an admirable mountaineer he is? He stands pledged to follow my friend Carruthers to the top of the highest rocks along the coast, between Kirkby and Crowtonglass; does n't he, Bentley?"

"Tell them," said Carruthers, slily, to Rupert, "that we shall find it difficult to get our crony half way up, without turning loose the Baronet's nag once more upon him."

"No! no!" replied Ullesbey, still suffering from his own hurt; "he 's had a bad fall, and been annoyed enough already."

"If you confine yourself, Mr. Ullesbey," observed Alderstoke, "to the wit and satire suggested by that gentleman, you are

freely welcome to proceed; and I will answer for your giving no pain in this or any other quarter."

"How do you feel yourself now, Ullesbey?" said Squire Cothelston. "Is your shoulder easier?"

"I dare say it will be very soon, Sir," returned Rupert.

"Have you derived any benefit from the fomentation I recommended?"

"I dare say I shall very soon, Sir," replied the youth.

"You are brisk upon us now, Alderstoke," said Sir Poole; "but what a dolorous condition you were in when I met you coming out of the dell there! Never saw such an object since I was christened! Your ladyship must have heard of his miserable plight?"

"Shocking!" exclaimed Lady Annabella.

"Common mud will give but a very faint idea of it," observed Miss Jaqueline; "for the appearance produced by that deep red mire from the clay, was as if Mr.

Alderstoke had been cruelly gashed and all over blood; as if he had been massacred, absolutely."

"Hideous!" cried Lady Annabella.

"Come, Mr. Ullesbey," said Carruthers, "you are at the university still, and have your classics at hand readier than any of us. Which Ajax was it that tumbled down, running a race you know, in all that beastly blood and slime, where they had been killing bulls or something? He put me in mind of him."

"Now to me," said Sir Poole, who was never to be outshone, "he looked a confounded deal more like old King Priam after he 'd been dragged round and round the walls of Troy."

"Ha!" cried Mr. Alderstoke, "that 's an event in the monarch's career which had escaped me."

"No: had it?" returned the Baronet, laughing aloud. "I say, Bentley, he must rub up his Mæonides a little."

"Not a little," said Carruthers, "if he

is to make himself thoroughly master of that fact."

The Baronet stared, as if he did not altogether enter into the spirit of the answer.

"Really though," continued Alderstoke, "I never heard of his being so treated before; and what's more, I am very sorry to hear it now."

"Why? I don't understand this. Come—come, what's the joke?" said Sir Poole.

"Nothing," replied the other, quietly; "only I should have hoped—poor old fellow!—he had suffered ill-usage enough, without that."

Mr. Cothelston, by one masterly observation, now diverted the whole stream of conversation into county business; which drove away his wife, but not till after repeated signals from both her daughters; for, to Lady Annabella (who never attended, unless something in her own way happened peculiarly to be addressed to herself), one general topic was much the same as another. Rupert Ullesbey soon retired, likewise, notwithstanding the Squire's fo-

mentation; and Alderstoke also, feeling that he left them upon a safer subject for him, than the alarm of the morning, followed the ladies' example, and secured his retreat with as little bustle as could be managed. The intention of this gentleman being to repair straightway to his own lodging, not two hundred yards from the western gates of Peterstow park,—take something warm and recruiting, and go to bed early; he mused as he walked across Mr. Cothelston's grounds (and with no great satisfaction, it has been suspected), upon the occurrences of that day, upon various incidents in the former part of his life, the connexions he had formed, and his expectations for the future. Mr. Alderstoke was by nature timid and apprehensive; and though firmly convinced that he feared none but substantial evils, and though he had used himself to exhaust his whole stock of ridicule upon the terrors of superstition, it is possible that he might not be so entirely free from them as he had been long willing to suppose. Without doubt, however, as there was a stream to be got over, between

him and his own home; a ditch or two, into which he might readily have contrived to fall in the dark; and many sturdy old oaks and sycamores, against which he might have run his nose, — it seemed natural enough, without any deeper motive than a sensibility to those dangers (such as they were), that he should have thought of returning to the house to borrow a lantern, when he perceived the night to be one of the darkest that he had been abroad in for months. But he did not return, nevertheless: he was unwilling to draw any more attention upon himself, and soon found out, or determined in his own mind, that he had been misled by the effect of sudden contrast, on coming into the air from an apartment brilliantly illuminated, and that there yet prevailed light sufficient to enable him to pick his way over ground, with every inch of which he ought to have been perfectly familiar. He changed his mind, therefore, and went on; always uncomfortable, when he was involved among the trees, relieved, when he got upon the open glade again,

and cautious, as he approached the water—the sound of which, rushing over some weirs, where the Squire's part of the stream ended, and the miller's began,—put him on his guard, so that he found the foot bridge without much difficulty, and thence passed by a small side-gate out of the Peterstow enclosures.

Being now near to his own quarters, and in his own proper domain, as it were, he proceeded at his ease, little expecting any annoyance henceforth in a straight path which led through a meadow, on one side open to the field, and on the other closely bounded by a paling about five feet in height. But the less he thought of being disturbed, the more was he discomposed when he beheld—as he imagined—something like the head of a man, leaning over the pales, at a few yards' distance before him, who appeared to look at him very attentively. Alderstoke shuddered and halted. Upon his stopping, the face also was withdrawn; and he hurried forwards, almost without daring to cast his eyes that way;

but could not help fancying that he had a glance, occasionally, of the same object again: and, as he laid his hand upon his garden-gate, it would, perhaps, be impossible to describe the misery that he endured from fright, nervous distress, and irritability, upon receiving a rude slap on the shoulder, which shook his whole frame!

"You 're welcome home, my hero," cried Holtofte, whose frolic it had been, first to dodge him in front, and then get over the pales behind him: "I was determined I 'd wait till you came back;—and when the park gate flung to, there could be no mistaking your footstep. You took me for a thief; I 'll be shot if you did n't,—so confess the truth;—I could swear it, by your edging off to the other——nay,—but,—what now? what 's come to the man?—His brain 's turned, I think! Why, Mr. Alderstoke! If he is n't crying like a child!"

That was certainly the fact; nor could he, by any means, recover the command of his feelings, necessary to transact busi-

ness with so coarse and odious a companion, during the time that Holtofte remained at his house; though he tried external aid, and opened a bottle of spirits, of which his soi-disant friend drank more than two thirds before he departed.

Mr. Cothelston was by much too proud a man to press civilities upon Sir Poole Preston, when he saw, or thought he saw, the other disposed to be remiss in his attentions at Peterstow; and the more particularly, because, in the judgment of the neighbourhood, the latter would have made so eligible a match for either of his daughters, as to have been set down for each of them, by common gossip, over and over again. But, on the other hand, when Sir Poole thought fit to put forward in his advances to them, the Squire, without any great effort, generally speaking, had the magnanimity to forget all former tiffs and slights, and the good sense to make his house as pleasant as he could. The Baronet therefore, in recompense of his present civilities and courteous deportment, was rein-

stated in all the favour that he ever enjoyed at Peterstow, where both he and young Carruthers became from this day pretty constant guests through the remainder of the autumn. Notwithstanding that alarming circumstance—the ridiculous fancies with which Rupert had suffered his head to be filled about Clara Cothelston, were still upheld by a confidence in her partiality for him; which, were we to recount all the trifling and whispering, complimentary accusations and candid admissions, mock quarrels and sentimental reconciliations, that had taken place between them, we feel positively certain nobody could have accused him of presumption in encouraging.

As to the younger sister,—early repelled by her short manner of speaking and apparent pride, he never had been any mighty favourite with her, or endeavoured to become so; but, whether it was that she continued to respect him for his spirited exertions on the day of their expedition from Kirkby, or that the almost perpetual addition of one of the before-mentioned young

men to their family circle, gave a new interest to every thing around her, and improved her natural temper universally; it undoubtedly struck Rupert that Jaqueline and he talked oftener together, had more jokes between them, and, in short, were become better friends than formerly. However, with Preston and Carruthers constantly in the house, it unavoidably happened that the consequence of our youth somewhat declined; but the less he was himself exalted as a principal personage, the more opportunity he possessed for observing others; nor, as we have been given to understand, did he enter upon that course of observation without deriving a very considerable portion of amusement from it.

The first discovery he made (and it took little time to find that out) was, that Bentley Carruthers and the Squire, did not remarkably suit; but that Lady Annabella, and the same young gentleman, did; the latter having acquired the habit of affecting an interest in her occupations, and being admitted to the privilege of looking over

the effusions which she was eternally busied in writing,—verses, as some conjectured, though nobody in existence but themselves, we believe, ever knew what. Then he communicated his own scraps of stuff to her in return, and she gave him her ideas thereon, till he completely established his claim in her estimation, to that first of all earthly characters,—a man of an elegant mind, taste, and talent. But closely as Rupert adverted to Carruthers, in respect of whom he had long felt very uncommon interest and curiosity; there was something in his character, or, at any rate, much in his whole deportment and proceedings, that the former could by no means make out to his satisfaction. Ullesbey had always supposed him the decided admirer of Jaqueline; and as that young lady, who either took no pains to conceal her feelings, or concealed them exceedingly ill, showed, beyond all possibility of question, that he had no reason for absolute despair; Rupert felt the more astonishment and perplexity at doubts which forced themselves upon him, and which,

day after day, increased,—whether Carruthers, in truth, cared one fig about her: not but that he certainly gave her more attention than he paid to any body else, so that, if she were not his object, it was no easy matter to conceive what brought him for ever to the Cothelstons. Be that as it might, the continual presence of other young men, who had lived a good deal in the world, made a difference in the situation of Rupert Ullesbey: he necessarily now found himself in some measure reduced from that importance in the family of which he had been secure, when Messrs. Holtofte and Alderstoke were the only frequent visitors with whom he could be put in competition. Of course, he was as well pleased before; but having long contemplated the probability of such an alteration, he still conducted himself with his accustomed good humour, cheerfulness, and absence of all conceit and pretension.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE face of the country between Peterstow and Molesden was, for the most part, of a pleasant description; in some places, indeed, it might have been called beautiful, exhibiting a lively variety of hill, wood, meadow, and glen; except for a tract of between three and four miles, where the road wound heavily through a chain of small, undulating, bare hillocks, over a bleak and gloomy waste.

It was in this least interesting region, on a fine though sharp morning in autumn, that a well-looking, well-dressed, and well-mounted cavalier appeared, cantering prettily and easily, in the direction of Peterstow park, while he endeavoured additionally to gratify himself by humming a country-dance much called for at that period, and entitled, "The Devil among the Tailors." He

was attired in as smart a pair of jockey boots, as the first hands in London could make him: buckskin leathers, without a spot to be seen upon them; not tight and torturing as his ancestors had been forced to endure that part of their clothing, but, according to the more rational fashion of the age we strive to portray, loose, bulging, and delightfully comfortable.

Of his waistcoat, little could be discerned: for a glossy dark green coat buttoned across it, not positively new perhaps, but new-ish, carefully brushed, and in excellent preservation. Nor was his high chivalric bearing disgraced by the tie of his neckcloth, which, without the effect of labour and study, approached probably as nearly to perfection as that important article of dress had ever yet been brought; and the whole was surmounted by a white hat shaded with green.

This brilliant apparition advanced (as above stated) upon his way singing; but he did not continue to sing long: for, before he had got on a quarter of a mile,

another horseman, on his retreat from Peterstow, wheeling from behind a hill which had hitherto concealed him from sight, crossed suddenly the path of the former. At this fortuitous occurrence, the blood high-mantled on both their cheeks: while reining in his steed with an admirable grace, after a pause of some moments, the green-vested chevalier thus addressed his brother of gentle birth:

"How goes it, Baronet? Have you heard the news?"

"I've heard what you mean, but it can't possibly be true."

"Upon my soul, 't is: the flag's up at Crowtonglass, and they talk of bonfires and illuminations."

"By George, I'm glad of it, then!" said Sir Poole; "I'll give a fête. It shall be a superior thing, Sir—I'll roast an ox—I've a great mind; but not till I know that the peace is absolutely signed, though."

"If so, you may spare your ale and wine for some months, very likely," observed the other; "because nothing's set-

tled yet but the preliminaries, as I hear. However, we shall have no more of their privateers, it's to be hoped, terrifying the girls upon our coast."

"A peace with France! I can scarce credit it yet," cried the Baronet. "There's a vagary for you! Who'd have expected this from——"

Here the discourse took a turn, which we would fain have suppressed, but for the necessity imposed upon all historians of giving a faithful description of manners. The truth is, they now fell to talking over the administration of the country, with that freedom and unbecoming flippancy which, as we have heard from good authority, the young men of those days too frequently permitted themselves to indulge in.

"Others may be driving at their own ends," said Sir Poole, at the conclusion of his political harangue; "but I have no private ends to carry: all I want, all I contend for, all I shall ever look forward to, is this—to see the real efficient strength of

the empire at the head of its affairs, and the true, old, genuine, English, constitutional principles of our forefathers once more acted upon in earnest." He then looked towards his companion, who was gnawing the handle of his whip, and thinking of something else; but who, upon finding he had finished, concurred in toto.

"By the way, Bentley," added the Baronet, "I fear you have been honouring me with a fruitless visit."

"I rode up to your gate," replied the other, steering dexterously between an admission of the truth and a direct falsehood, "but had no card to leave."

"You had better come back."

"I should like it; but I am pressed for time: upon my life, I am."

"Oh! you 'd better; though I can offer nothing so attractive as you will meet with at Peterstow, where, I 'd lay a thousand to one, you intend to call."

"Done!" cried the other; "and I consider your thousand as good as in my pocket at this minute. No—but without fun

the chances are against you; for my visit there depends entirely on the time before me: by three I must be at home, on a variety of accounts."

After mutual nods, they now parted; and Mr. Carruthers pursued his course, but without much of his former hilarity. On the contrary, he became absorbed in the following uneasy train of thought; sometimes passing through his mind in silent reflection, sometimes expressed aloud in soliloquy:

"To be sure, there are men in the kingdom—not a great many though, faith! whose condition altogether—taking in rank, fortune, and acquirements—I might be disposed to envy, or something very much like it; and yet, judging by my own feelings, if I could know all their crosses and vexations, it seems extremely probable that, upon the whole, one wouldn't be willing to change situations with any of 'em. There 's that fellow Preston, now: he is an infernal deal more jealous of me than I am, or ever was, of any body else." Here he

pulled up his cravat, and felt his shirt ends, to ascertain that the wind had not deranged them. "That fellow carries things off tolerably well, I admit; but he'd give his ears for Jaqueline Cothelston – I know he would—and if he thought she'd have him, he would propose to her to-morrow. How horridly, therefore, must he hate me, whom he supposes to be glorying in my success, enjoying myself, and carrying my points, one after another, with every kind of delicious prospect for the future, to his peculiar mortification. Deuce is in it! he's mistaken—he is; most devilishly mistaken! With every advantage that I have over him——" Here he stretched himself out long in his stirrups, and surveyed his own person from the hip to the extremity of the toe. "I am a more unhappy man than he is at this very hour Pshaw—unhappy! hardly that; it would be carrying the joke too far: but worried I am, miserably worried, and that's the fact. What a pity 't is that we cannot, upon all occasions, direct our inclinations to the right object! I

might then engage in a pursuit, which, without vanity I may say, could not be discouraging, and which (even if obstacles were to interfere) would afford one occupation for the country, and be attended with more or less pleasure and amusement through every day in the week; instead of that cold, unfeeling, perverse, provoking prude, having the power to make my heart ache, as she does. Alack, alack! and what is to be the end of it all? Am I to give up visiting at this house altogether, in order to avoid the company of a minx like her? or am I to marry her outright, and at once forfeit all just pretensions to some advancement in the world by such a step as marriage, in favour of a girl whose connexions—on one side at least—are so obscure, so unsatisfactory, and indeed, of late, so disreputable? Hers is precisely the situation in society that would not suit me. I wish she were either a step higher; or, by the way, a very great deal lower, which would do for me to the full as well, not to say better. But supposing even, I

was to make her a positive offer—Confusion seize the thing! am I so certain of being accepted? We hear of the variety of tastes, and well we may; for, by Heaven! tastes are wayward, capricious, and unintelligible, beyond all imagination; and if I a' n't sometimes led to suspect that she rather dislikes me than not, I'll be hanged this instant!"

These meditations were disturbed by an effort which he now found it necessary to make towards opening a small gate that communicated with part of Peterstow park, and which, his horse being hot and troublesome, was not attended with the immediate success that he desired; nor indeed with any, as long as he spurred, lashed, and fretted: but, on calling on his patience, he soon surmounted the difficulty. This operated as a moral lesson to him; so that, before he got round to the stables, to which point, with the freedom of an intimate and acceptable acquaintance, he was apt to proceed in the first instance, his manner had recovered its cus-

tomary serenity, and not a shade lowered upon his countenance.

Mr. Carruthers now marched into the very heart of the dwelling-house without impediment, or so much as seeing a soul; and turning into a small parlour, or rather anti-room leading to a parlour where the gentlemen of the family were in the habit of getting ready for shooting of a morning; he seemed for a good while to be occupied in contemplating some pictures that hung over the chimney-piece. On a cock-fight he just cast his eyes for a moment; he paid still less attention to the gallant capture of La Réunion, national frigate, by His Majesty's ship Crescent; and none at all to the final interview between Louis the Sixteenth and his afflicted family; but when he came to certain portraits in pencil, pinned up to the wall without frames, the production, apparently, of the different girls in the house, who had been amusing themselves by trying to take each other's likeness, one of the latter arrested his earnest regard for many minutes.

"Villanously done," said he, "though there's a resemblance, certainly. I don't remember this concern. Whose property may this be?" he added, approaching a fowling-piece in the corner, which he took up to examine.—"Oh! ay, ay, young Ullesbey. Can that chap shoot, I wonder?" One would hardly have thought that question a subject much worth speculating upon: certain it is, nevertheless, that while Carruthers held the gun, and continued to turn it about, he never once appeared to be looking at it; and the deep reverie which entirely beset him, from the moment he had guessed the owner, was only dispelled by the sound of music in the room above. Convinced by these strains that somebody must be at home, he stole softly up stairs, pushed the door open, which was just ajar, and crept close behind Jaqueline, who did not perceive him, till he might have laid his hand upon her shoulder; and who, imagining it to be somebody coming in on purpose to frighten her, turned round in a rage, with gestures very much as if

she had been going to strike him. Her fury, however, did not carry her quite that length; for on discovering the intruder,—in a rapture of delightful surprise, which she made some bad attempts to carry off, under a laugh at her own impetuosity—she fell to coquettish complaints upon the inconvenience of so undesirable an interruption, and remarked, in the same vein, upon the ease and assurance with which he reckoned on a welcome, and thus presumed to wander about the house without being properly announced by the servants.

"A welcome," said he, "I felt to be out of all question, after such shameless behaviour, and think myself too well off not to be driven down stairs again; for, when I heard who was playing, I determined to come up, even at the risk of being scolded. Any treatment, Miss Jaqueline, short of expulsion from your presence, I had made up my mind to."

"You do not flatter yourself, however," replied the damsel, turning to the instrument and striking chords with her left

hand, " that I shall leave off all my occupations for the purpose of entertaining you?"

"Heaven forbid!" said he; "I had rather you conversed to be sure: but for the universe I would n't disturb your studies. No: go on. Play, sing, dance, read, write, and cypher if you please; only don't turn me out of the room."

"How could you tell, down in the hall," observed Jaqueline, "which of us it was that sat practising here?"

"Oh! there 's an expression in the touch of some people, a vibration, that goes to one 's inmost heart. There 's a delicacy in executing even the commonest passages."

"Don't talk nonsense," said she, "or if you must be silly, at least don't talk such deplorable nonsense as that; when I am just as confident that you have not the slightest conception what description of music I was playing, as—as—you are yourself."

"Your positive assertion, Miss Jaque-

line, it is of course impossible for me to contradict; but I should like to have a great sum of money depending upon this wager.—Place me at the foot of the stairs, let every lady belonging to the family go over the same identical tune, four times round each of you, intermingle the performances as much as you please, and I will still undertake to distinguish your finger upon the instrument. And where would be the mighty feat in so doing, when in fact I should only have to compare you with Miss Cothelston? for your cousin hardly plays at all, I think."

"If she does not, to whom were you listening last Wednesday night for upwards of three quarters of an hour?"

"Ah! yes: she does play the old music a little, Corelli and those fellows, I don't say but she does. What a very odd girl she is! She always puts me in mind of the little heroine in a good book, with her meekness, and her prudence, and her distresses; and the best of it is, old David Derricoe votes her a beauty. She never at

any time made a substantive part in the society of this house; but since the affair of her father, I never saw any thing like it. She stalks in and glides out, and speaks to no one; and gives me more an idea of the Castle Spectre, or the Bleeding Nun, or—— Only, indeed, she neither receives nor (I will say that, fairly, for her) expects to receive so much in the way of attention as those portentous appearances would probably be favoured with."

"I beg your pardon there," observed Jaqueline; "Mary Mac-Eure is no more deficient in good opinion of herself, than other people."

"Aha!" cried he, with significant nods and smiles; "nothing can escape your shrewdness, as I have often and often had reason to observe before. You are right, Miss Jaqueline; you 're right. Under that placid and——"

"Demure manner," said Jaqueline.

"I have now and then detected," continued Carruthers, "no inconsiderable allowance——"

"Of self-confidence," added Jaqueline, "and a great share of conceit."

"A devil of a share!" said he. "So you have established a tame young student here? Is he an endurable kind of a youth? Tell us a little about him."

"I don't know that he's disagreeable to me," she replied: "and when you come to talk to him he is not dull, certainly: then he's inoffensive and obliging, and very civil, remarkably civil, for this age."

"You need not have dealt out that side-blow, fair lady," said he laughing; "but as to Mr. Ullesbey—your sister, I doubt, would give him a somewhat higher character than you do."

"I am not so very sure of that," returned Jaqueline; "but I'll tell you who would. Mary would."

"Plague take it!" cried Carruthers, starting from his chair. "One of those stupid, troublesome flies has got into my eye; and in rubbing him out, I've rubbed him a monstrous deal further in."

"Jaqueline now recommended—what-

ever is usually recommended on these occasions; and after a suitable interval he returned, with a handkerchief over his eye, and renewed the conversation.

"I always took Ullesbey, do you know, to have been, or to have supposed himself, an humble admirer of Miss Cothelston; but it seems that he and your cousin are the allies after all?"

"You are somewhat curious about that young gentleman, methinks," said Jaqueline, with an air that a little alarmed Carruthers, and put an abrupt stop to his series of inquiries.

"How handsomely they bind these things now-a-days," he observed, taking up a small music-book, into which she had made a practice of copying select tunes and favourites, that reminded her of particular circumstances and particular people. But no sooner had he opened it, than she snatched the book out of his hand.

"I saw my own name there," cried Carruthers.

"No more than you saw the King of Prussia's."

"I did, I declare, Miss Jaqueline: I'll be bound I am ridiculed or abused, and I will see how."

"And I protest, most solemnly, that you shall not."

"I will, I will—or be revenged some other way."

"Let go the book, Mr. Carruthers, and don't be so excessively absurd. Let it go, I say."

The door opening at this juncture, admitted Clara Cothelston and her mother; and an expression of some gravity clouded even the countenance of Lady Annabella, when she witnessed a course of proceeding that might so very easily have been mistaken for romping.

"I am glad you're come, Mamma," said Jaqueline; "for he insists, most impertinently, upon opening my 'ballet' book, which I am resolved he shall never do."

"Oh! is that all?" said her ladyship;

"but you are putting yourself in a heat, my love."

"You were wishing, Lady Annabella, for a copy of the serenade that I mentioned on Wednesday," said Carruthers, "and I have the best grounds to hope that the next London post will bring it down, both words and music; but you'll excuse me—I must have an absolute promise that you will not let it out of your own hands, even within this house. If it should get into print through my means, I had better shoot myself, I believe, for I never shall be able to show my face again. The words are supposed to be by——" here he whispered a name that has not transpired—"and are intended, it is thought, for some future publication."

"No!" exclaimed Lady Annabella, with a face of rather more ecstacy than she would have manifested at the information of her husband having drawn the twenty thousand pound prize in the lottery. "You remember a few stanzas, Mr. Carruthers, I

am certain you do, so pray let us have them."

"No," said he, "n---o, I'm afraid not."

"Yes, yes, you do. If you won't oblige me in this, I vow I'll never speak to you more."

"I only recollect the first," said he:

"Rise, lady, rise!
Dispel, of night waning,
All shadows remaining;
Rise, lady, rise!
And rival the lustre of dawn."

"Exquisite!" cried Lady Annabella. "The true tone and spirit!—Well—The next; the next."

"The second stanza," said he, "is at least as good, if I have it accurately."

"Rise, lady, rise!
Delay'd is Aurora,
While slumbers my Flora;
Rise, lady, rise!
And rival, &c."

"Incomparable!" cried her ladyship.

"They are his own, I suspect," said Clara.

"That they are, I have not the remotest doubt," said the younger sister: while their mother repeated her transports, and followed him about the room, pressing him to a confession; but he denied every thing, and smirked, and would (if he could have contrived it) have blushed, and helped himself, pretty liberally, to some cold partridge that was brought in for luncheon, and then bowed off.

Carruthers, on his return, passed within a few yards of Rupert Ullesbey and Mr. Cothelston, who were walking together under a row of trees near the porter's lodge. Ullesbey was the audience, apparently, and the Squire's harangue incessant; nor could it have been more grave and impressive, had the fate of all his family, with every connexion and acquaintance of theirs in the world, depended upon these deliberations. Rupert, still in listening attitude, was not however so completely absorbed by what he heard, but that he took notice of the horseman, and made him a salutation, by waveing his hand, which called the attention of

his companion to Mr. Carruthers, likewise. Hereupon, a pause ensuing, the latter saw his danger plainly enough; but 'twas too late; for, before he had so far got by them as to be entitled, without imputation of rudeness, to spur away briskly and effectually, the Squire beckoned to him with an irresistible solemnity; and after obliging him to dismount and give his horse to the porter—drew the two young men apart in ominous silence to a pathless side of the park; though no soul could overhear a syllable they said where they were before, nor, had the whole village heard them, would it have signified one farthing.

"I have decided, Mr. Carruthers," said the Squire, "considering you as a gentleman to whom my influence and respectability in the county are not quite indifferent"—Carruthers bowed;—"I have come to the decision, I say, of imparting also to you some circumstances which I have been touching upon to my friend Ullesbey, here.—You are to understand, Sir, that if I had ever allowed myself to be discomposed by little

things, I might have felt hurt, perhaps, at a late occurrence within my own immediate parish : you will hardly believe, that among my very own people,—among the Peterstow people, Sir, I have been treated with a want of attention almost amounting to disrespect. You may well look astonished, but the fact is so; and, to be sincere with you both, to a more captious mind it certainly would have been offensive, notwithstanding the very gentlemanlike behaviour of Sir Poole Preston, who has been over to Peterstow already this morning to talk to me about it; and, as he with much delicacy and propriety expressed himself, to ask my advice upon the subject."

He then proceeded to give them, in substance, the following information; but so confusedly, from the constant attempt to sink or explain away all that was personally mortifying to him in the conduct of the country people, that we think it advisable to relate the business in our own words rather than his.

It may be remembered, that during the

summer months certain stories had prevailed about nocturnal meetings in the woods near Peterstow, which had terrified to such a degree the inhabitants of that and the adjoining villages, some being made seriously uneasy, and others, in order to increase the general excitement, pretending to be more alarmed than they really were; that at one time, the paths through the wood (ways of communication between different hamlets and farms, which were extremely useful, not to say indispensably necessary) had been universally forsaken, almost from sunset to sunrise. Still, in spite of the unwillingness of the rustics to let these stories die away, reports did not follow each other with the rapidity that the gossips had calculated upon. Now and then a bold Crowtonglass fisherman would be found sufficiently hardy to pass through the heart of the wood at midnight, and with perfect impunity,—a provoking assertion, which might be disbelieved, but as long as the narrator appeared again among them without visible damage, could not be dis-

proved. John Waugh kept his ground, moreover; and was neither killed himself, nor—what would have done quite as well—hanged for killing any body else: so that the whole matter might have blown over, but for the officious activity of one Griffiths, a baker, who thought fit to amuse himself with perpetually passing and repassing the suspected quarter by night as well as by day; telling abundance of lies, and aiming at a reputation for a desperate dare-devil sort of character, superior to the terrors of the multitude, though he never failed to affirm, or insinuate, that such terrors were by no means without foundation. One of this man's histories was, that although he could see nothing at the moment, he had been spoken to one morning before sunrise by a human being (as he said he wished to suppose) near a certain rock and cavern, which the country people, for no reason that any body could ever discover (probably it was a corruption of some other word), called the Tartar Rock. After this notable adventure, nothing would serve, but Master

Griffiths and two of his friends, in pursuance of an intention which they had proclaimed for some days before, must needs return the same way from a merry-making, so timeing their expedition as to be at the cave between eleven and twelve at night; they were armed with bludgeons and pitchforks, and inspired by as much strong beer, nearly, as they could swill.

What devices were practised against these fellows, Mr. Cothelston declared he had never been able to make out, or even conjecture: but they talked, it seems, of fearful noises, and the only one they particularized, it must be owned, was fearful enough; the sound, namely, of fire-arms, in one direction, while from another, as they were all more ready to swear, than the gentleman to whom they applied was to receive their oaths,—they descried some strange apparition moving towards them. The whole party, as might have been reckoned upon with certainty, now took to flight; and all escaped but the baker himself; who, being hampered in a holly-bush, not only tore

hands, clothes, and face, till he was all over blood, but in sober sadness, according to his own report, and according also to ocular proof which he exhibited on getting home, he was severely and cruelly beaten. With a view to dignify this cudgelling, Griffiths always maintained that his life had been aimed at, and would inevitably have been taken, but for Waugh the cottager, whom his cries at length brought to his assistance, and at whose approach his persecutors vanished. Now, as Mr. Cothelston, the nearest magistrate, had been censured for former inactivity, for slighting other information of a similar description, and was accused of wilful determination to credit no ill reports concerning his own neighbourhood, Baker Griffiths' complaint, by the advice of all his companions, was transferred to Sir Poole Preston. Hence the wrath of our Squire, assuaged only, as before mentioned, by the attentions of Sir Poole, in consulting him upon the affair; which the latter felt the more disposed to, not merely because he peculiarly wished to

keep well with Mr. Cothelston just at present, but because he was, likewise, utterly at a loss how to proceed by himself. The Squire having concluded his narrative, at last, to Carruthers' great relief; all the three laid their heads together in apparent earnest: Rupert not being without his share of eagerness and curiosity upon the subject, and the other young man clearly seeing that his disposition to laugh at the whole would never be endured upon this occasion. Various methods of proceeding were now suggested, to all of which the Squire objected, as a matter of course, whenever they did not commence with himself,—and even when they did, in the next sentence, he generally demonstrated their inefficiency. In the end, it was rather consented to, than agreed upon, that a body of the gentry should be assembled at Peterstow, and absolutely keep guard themselves for a night, on or near the spot whence these alarms had originated; which vigorous determination, however, was to be held in the profoundest secrecy till the very time for its

execution; and only at that moment they were to insist (without the most distant right to take any such liberty) upon being admitted to a joint occupation with Waugh of his hut in the wood, during that entire night. Thus far the plan seemed to be arranged: it was also settled that Holtofte, who passed for a fearless enterprising fellow, should at a fit opportunity be added to the party. But about Mr. Alderstoke, considerable difference arose. When they spoke of him, Carruthers grew warmer, and no longer appearing indifferent to what was going forward, he stigmatized him as a poltroon who could never be trusted; in which representation, Rupert, spite of all that he thought might be expected from the other's acuteness in counsel, so far coincided, that nothing probably, but Mr. Cothelston's dislike of contradiction, added to the habitual influence obtained by Alderstoke over his mind, would have induced them to let that person into their confidence.

As it was, the Squire stood out obstinately; and the other two giving way, they

parted, on an understanding that Carruthers should be duly apprized beforehand as soon as they had fixed upon the evening for their operations. When, with all possible caution and gravity, the matter was opened to Mr. Holtofte, he first slighted their apprehensions, then ridiculed, and finally abused the baker, who had caused this disturbance; but perceiving pretty quickly that he had got upon a wrong scent, and was disgusting his patron by the tone he assumed, he thought it as prudent to change his note, and bluster; admitting that he had taken too light an impression of the thing at first, but would be ready, both then and always, to venture upon any description of service, —indeed, he added,—to risk his life, at the call of Mr. Cothelston, or any of his family.

Alderstoke received their application to him in a somewhat different manner: he stood on the dissuasive, talked darkly, magnified the inconveniences of the plan that was proposed, and threw in insinuations of danger. He even hinted that he had set an inquiry on foot, himself, from which he

entertained considerable expectations; but finished, like the former, by a zealous offer of his poor aid, and earnestly entreated that he might not be left out when they carried their design into execution.

Sir Poole, meanwhile, was delighted with the affair, and every circumstance belonging to it. Just enough he thought of hazard and uncertainty might be attached to the business, to give it an air of interest, not to use a grander term: and the closetings and consultations of the men, and pryings, indirect complaints, and pettishness of some of the women, because they were kept out of the secret, procured him as agreeable a week or ten days as he had ever known.

CHAPTER XV.

THE important day at length arrived; and dinner being ordered at half past four, Lady Annabella demanded why? Her husband said, he had his reasons. The two girls fretted because he would say no more, and repeated the word "reasons" in a sneering tone of voice, intended to be provoking; though in truth Mr. Cothelston was most vexed by his wife, who with evident sincerity avowed her belief, that nothing was in agitation which she would walk across the room to be informed of. It soon appeared that some company were expected; and the Miss Cothelstons disdaining to dress for a meal held at so uncouth an hour, planted themselves at the window, towards dinner-time, that they might witness the approach of the select guests. This was

exactly what Sir Poole Preston desired. Without a bow, or a kiss of the hand, or sign of the slightest recognition, he descended full in their presence from his curricle, and handed over with infinite ostentation his holster and pistols to a livery servant, while, with Spelman the butler (one of the initiated), he turned down a gravel walk that led to the coal-yard, instead of entering the hall; and might have been supposed by his gestures all the way, to be in the act of revealing some dire and horrible atrocity,—perhaps a conspiracy to burn every market-town in England. Bentley Carruthers came not long after him, with a much fainter idea of the grandeur of these operations, to which he would beyond comparison have preferred the ordinary mode of passing an evening at Peterstow. This youth neither produced sword or fire-arms; and, far from disregarding, under the pressure of his awful duties, all courtesy to the females of the house, he made a dead halt beneath the window, and addressed Miss Jaqueline in certain lines about "a winged messenger

of heaven o'er his head, glorious to the upturned eyes of wondering mortals;" written (as we have been told) by a man of some talent, upwards of two hundred years ago.

They had as good a dinner, however, at Peterstow, as if this perilous adventure never had been in contemplation, to which Mr. Alderstoke was admitted, but not Holtofte; the latter having received directions to join them just before the setting out for their nightly rendezvous. Nobody at table said much; Carruthers perhaps made most efforts to talk, who sat between Clara Cothelston and Miss Mac-Eure, though neither of them seemed to give him great encouragement: but there was, in fact, little general discourse.

"Something of uncommon consequence is in agitation," said Jaqueline, "I have no doubt; but in the mean while, we're all exceedingly stupid,—are we not?"

"Oh, no," cried Carruthers; "only as grave as is becoming. You wouldn't have

us talk upon ordinary occurrences *now*, Miss Jaqueline?"

"I have brought a boat-cloak for you, Sir, to be worn over your great coat;" said Alderstoke to Mr. Cothelston; "for the whole afternoon has been boisterous, and, I fear, we shall have a worse night."

"Hush, hush," returned the Squire, pointing to the servants.

"Surely you are not so crazy, all of you, as to intend going out of doors this evening, when there is no moon, and one of these equinoctial storms has already begun?" observed Miss Cothelston.

"Do not be anxious: there may, perhaps, be ground for curiosity, but, trust me, none for alarm," replied Rupert, tenderly, supposing her remark to have been addressed to him; a mistake which Clara did not contradict, though she certainly spoke to Sir Poole Preston.

"Take away, take away," said Mr. Cothelston to the man who was removing the cheese; "what an age you are about it! we have all done dinner this half hour."

No sooner had the servants disappeared, than the master of the house hemmed three or four times, whispered to Preston on his right, then to Alderstoke on his left, and turning to the ladies, with a look of firmness and decision, he informed them, in fewer words than might have been expected, of the expedition proposed for the night; taking care, likewise, to state explicitly, that their resolutions were so steadily made up to this feat, that nothing had been suffered to transpire till that instant, for fear of the supplications and resistance which female solicitude might have opposed to their purpose; and adding, that all present objections would therefore be utterly fruitless.

"Heaven bless you, Sir Poole, if I should never see you again, after we have gone up to our coffee," said Jaqueline, in so humourously pathetic a tone, that Ullesbey could scarce keep his countenance, and Carruthers bent his head below the table to have his laugh out.

"What a strange, out-o'-the-way

scheme!" observed Lady Annabella; "I am not sure that I dislike the conception of it."

"'Tis a mighty wild business, in my opinion," said Miss Mac-Eure, in low voice to Rupert, her nearest neighbour on the left-hand; "and I'm astonished that my uncle should lend himself to such a freak. Is Mr. Alderstoke to be of your party?"

"So 'tis decided, I fancy;" replied he. "I cannot say that I look forward to much hazard."

"The principal danger I fear," said Mary, "is, that some of you will catch your deaths of cold."

"My nerves will be in a wretched state," observed Clara; "so disturbed, that I sha'n't have a wink of sleep all night."

"And I," said her sister, "shall be in no hurry to go to bed, but without feeling so very nervous about the matter."

"My dears," cried Lady Annabella, "I will not suffer the house to be turned topsy-turvy in that way, either. No: I'll have you both go to bed at the proper hour, as I

shall myself; and if any thing shocking happens to your father, Mr. Bentley Carruthers has been so good as to promise to come down from the wood directly, and let me know it."

"Mr. Holtofte, Sir," said a footman, entering, to usher in that worthy personage; who made his appearance, buttoned up to the chin in a bear's skin great coat with about forty capes, and holding a sheathed cutlass in his hand by way of a walking-stick.

"Your servant, Sir; your servant, ladies;" with a low bow. "Exact to my time, Sir, I fancy, knowing how you love punctuality on all occasions; but I wish I could bring a better report of the weather. Though it has not struck six, it's so dark, even now, that I should recommend the lanterns to be lit,—before——"

"You may go on, Mr. Holtofte; my family is apprized of every thing," said Cothelston.

"I should only have urged, Sir, the necessity of our being provided with covered

lights, well guarded and secured. The evening 's rough enough, I can tell you, to make one shiver and shudder within doors; ay,—even in such a house as yours, Sir, with every comfort about you. Then, look you, Mr. Cothelston, Waugh was n't to have a word said to him, by your express order; so he never expects us; where he may be, is all a chance; and 't is ten to one we 've to break the cottage door open, or we shall have no shelter whatever to retreat to, although the night should turn out as bad as, I give you all fair warning, it most likely will."

"Ay," said Sir Poole Preston, "if we cannot get in by fair means, we must by foul; for, of course, the fellow you speak of fastens up his house, when he goes out fishing for twelve hours together, and perhaps great part of that time in the dark."

"Nobody will catch him fishing to-night, Sir Poole," observed Alderstoke.

"Oh! trust him for that," said Holtofte. "Not a boat at Crowtonglass would

put to sea if you were to offer ten guineas an hour for one."

"Faith! I don't know," cried Carruthers; "'t is so very tempestuous, you see; I was thinking whether—may be—another night might n't be full as advisable. A stiller one—hey? We shall meet nobody, good or bad, you may swear to that. Who upon earth would venture abroad now!—hey, Alderstoke?"

"The wind shrieks, positively," said Mary Mac-Eure.

"And shakes the very room we are in," added Jaqueline. "Take care what you engage in, Sir Poole! My spirits are not apt to be affected by a storm; but I have seldom heard one howl more dismally, it must be owned."

"Mr. Alderstoke, what do you say to all this?" observed the Squire. "What do you, Mr. Holtofte?"

"Sir, you know perfectly well," replied the latter, "that I have always questioned half, and laughed at the rest of the stuff, which that numskull Griffiths, and some

of them, have been disturbing the whole village with: but you seemed to take it in another light. Now if any illegal, any secret meetings are held, as they say, between your property and Sir Poole Preston's—this will be a night of business, or I'm a Dutchman! Interruption is the last thing they'll be looking for in such weather as this."

Mr. Cothelston then turned to Alderstoke, who nodded assent.

"And that is my opinion also," said the Squire, oracularly: "an opinion not hastily formed, or very willingly, let me assure you: the sooner, therefore, we prepare ourselves, the better."

"Now this I call not only good fun, but good sense," observed Carruthers to Miss Jaqueline, as they left wine, dessert, and an excellent warm parlour, to get ready for passing many hours in a dirty miserable hut, or the actual woods.

The women likewise quitting the room at the same time, Messrs. Alder-

stoke and Holtofte remained standing over the fire by themselves.

"What should have hindered you from preventing all this devilish nonsense?" said Holtofte, drinking off the remnant of a glass of wine, and filling another brimmer the next moment.

"Nothing but your advice given directly against me—nothing but your eternal habit of crossing me. I agree, however, that since things have come to this pass, 't will be best to get it over at once now: we 're lucky in the weather, Dick; though I have a notion they would be tolerably surprised to hear me say so."

"Young Carruthers seems shy of the business," said Holtofte. "Is he afraid, think ye?"

"Not he: the puppy only votes it troublesome; but there are others whose eagerness begins to droop, unless I 'm greatly mistaken."

"I confess myself," resumed Mr. Holtofte, "in an infernal rage with Sir—what 's his name, Preston. That 's an enor-

mous ass, Sir; he has just found out what a fine thing it is to be an active able man in the county; and these are the first fruits of his conceited officiousness. This is his getting up from first to last."

"Leave him to me," returned Alderstoke; "and as pleasant an evening shall he have as I can contrive for him. Now don't be guzzling there—don't, Dick—for they're all coming back; they are, upon my honour."

It might have been amusing to any one (and we have no doubt was highly so to Holtofte and Alderstoke) to observe the expression in the faces of their different partners in this expedition, when they returned to the dining-room.

The endeavour of Ullesbey to look as grave as the crisis required, the ill-suppressed disgust and impatience of Carruthers, the sense of arduous duties upon his hands, which contracted the brow of the Squire, and the air of firmness with which Sir Poole examined the flints and locks of his pistols, while he repeatedly turned his

eyes to the window and shook his head, in sympathy with the trees, that he could just discern, bending to the very ground before the blast—constituted, on the whole, no ordinary scene. Spelman next joined the array with a blunderbuss; and the under servants, men and maids, distributed themselves about in every part of the house, some peeping from above, some from below, nudging, pointing, whispering, and tittering; some looking through the banisters, and others with their heads only raised above the kitchen stairs; but all curious in the highest degree to witness the order of march of this formidable body.

Mr. Cothelston, however, had something to say to the butler before they set out; which, though by a speaker of less precision, it might have been explained in a quarter of a minute, took nearly ten to be communicated by the Squire.

During this delay, the fire having ceased to flame, and the room being very gloomy, Mr. Alderstoke stumbled against the person nearest to him.

"I ask your pardon a thousand times," he cried. "You are not hurt, I trust?"

"Not a bit. Not at all," replied the other; "but I am glad you did n't step on my left foot, where a horse trod upon me only a few days ago, as it might have lamed me for the night."

"No slight matter would have kept you from this expedition, Sir Poole; there can be little question of that."

"I hope not," said the Baronet: "you do me justice there, Alderstoke; but why distinguish me from the rest?"

"Without depreciating any body else," replied the other, "I hold that he who risks the most, must necessarily show the most courage."

"Risks! To be sure, I am ready to risk any thing, if it should be expedient. 'Risks most!" Why, 'most?' How d'ye make that out?"

"I take it for granted," resumed the former, "you have been through the town at the bottom of your own park, within these twenty-four hours—"

"No: I don't know that I have," said the Baronet, seizing his arm and drawing him away into a corner.

"I can give no information where they come from, or what they call themselves," continued Alderstoke, quietly.

"What! Who call themselves?" cried Sir Poole, in a tone perceptibly altered.

"Of course I mean those ragged, half-naked, brawny, desperate-looking rascals, that have been gathering together during the last two days, from various quarters, at Crowtonglass. Some say they are Swashford men; some think they come down from the isle of Swyer, and a worse breed, let me tell you——"

"Sir Poole Preston, are you ready?" cried Mr. Cothelston.

"Quite, Sir, quite. I'll follow you this instant. But I say, Alderstoke, how comes it that I've never heard of these people? and, at any rate, they are nothing to me, you know, more than to all the rest of the party."

"Certainly not, my dear Sir Poole, un-

less it were you who received Griffiths' information, which I thought had been the case."

To this remark, by far the most disagreeable one he had heard yet, the Baronet was precluded from replying, by Mr. Cothelston calling to him once more; and their forces being now duly marshalled, they left Peterstow, with its numerous conveniencies and attractions, and took the direction of John Waugh's solitary habitation.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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